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THE UNCLE'S LEGACY.

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

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THE UNCLE'S LEGACY.

CHAPTER I.

"But, though I loved you well, I woo'd you not;
And yet, good faith, I wished myself a man;
Or, that we women had men's privilege
Of speaking first."

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

THE next day, accordingly, after Monsieur De Malleville had sat some time to a miniature painter of great reputation, the former, his two nieces, Louisé's little *capitaine*, and Arthur started for the appointed scene of the pic-nic.

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Morosini, and ten or twelve others, met them on the ground.

The first object of attraction, as there were three or four foreigners present, who had never visited it, was the old Palace where Louis the XIV. was born, and James the II. of England died an exile. In walking through the cool, ancient apartments, Aurélie had the arm of the young Italian, Arthur having given his to a little sprightly, piquant *Parisienne* with full round eyes, and a nose very *retroussé*.

"How do you like our *belle* France?" enquired the latter.

"Oh, it is a charming country," was the brief reply.

"So gay, and amusing, and happy, Monsieur, *n'est ce pas?*"

"It is very gay, and very amusing," returned Arthur. "But it strikes me, from the little I have yet had time to know of it, that the smiles of France frequently cover as much unhappiness as exists elsewhere."

Aurélie, who, to listen to her brilliant and witty conversation at the time, seemed to be delighted with the society of the alternately pensive and passionate Morosini, overheard the latter portion of this remark. He had never once, yet, spoken so much sentiment to her, and she felt jealous that he should be treading on such usually slippery ground with another, who was, moreover, almost a stranger to him. Every woman is more or less indignant, if she happen to detect anything of a sentimental character intended exclusively for the ear of some one else belonging to her own sex. Aurélie became more thoughtful and silent, which sudden change the Italian at once ascribed to his own frequent remonstrances, addressed to her, against an air of gaiety which appeared to him inconsistent with the kind of love with which he wished to inspire her for himself.

"Dearest Aurélie, how much I prefer even

that slight shade of sadness upon your classical face to all the sparkle of vivacity which you know so well how to adopt, but which does but conceal the higher beauties of your deeper nature. At last, you will be serious, and listen to me? Come, let us escape from this suffocating crowd, into the gardens: neither of us can have any interest here."

Morosini was turning to do as he had said, but Aurélie laid a firm, restraining pressure upon his arm, and as she did so, her bosom swelled with one of those deep inspirations which generally accompany the first movements of annoyance or anger, but which may easily be mistaken for sighs, especially in a woman. The Italian was deceived by it, and his heart thrilled at the thought that his eloquence and devotion were fast sublimating away what he characterized as the lighter portions of the French girl's disposition.

Arthur's little *Parisienne* continued:

"Is it true, monsieur, that people are as sad and joyless in England as we believe them to be?"

"Perhaps they do not express their pleasure as vividly, or as frequently as French people do; but they have certainly enough to be happy with, for all that."

"It is but natural to suppose so; there must be loves and friendships there as well as here, and in them consists the real felicity of life, does it not? Oh, monsieur, if a soul can but love deeply it is sure to be happy; what do you think?"

"What an absurd question!" exclaimed, in an under tone, Aurélie, who was answering "yes" and "no" in the wrong places to all Morosini's remarks; for, without at all designing it, she could not help hearing what was passing between Arthur and his companion.

"That depends," replied the former, to the above interrogatory; "the capacity you speak

of may render it, on the contrary, very unhappy, under some circumstances."

"What can you mean by calling my question absurd?" demanded the Italian, who of course took Aurélie's contemptuous ejaculation to himself; "I was asking you if love does not seem more in its element beneath green trees, and blue skies, than under these curious old roofs of antique splendour."

"For my part," pursued the *Parisienne*, "I assure you, that I have no prejudices in favour of my own country; the *épanchement* of the heart is charming anywhere, and should unite all the world as one family in my opinion; what do you think?"

"That again depends on circumstances," replied Arthur, who now felt that if he did not resist, in time, he might have to commit the ungallant act of refusing a direct offer of marriage made to him by a lady. "I am afraid I have no generous tendency to such world-wide com-

munism as you appear to desire: I don't think that any amount of outpouring or *êpanchement* of the heart, as you call it, would cause me to love in return, in some instances."

"Now, signior, I am willing to hear you make love in your Italian fashion under the trees in the gardens, if you desire it," said Aurélie, interrupting another of Morosini's tirades, which she had but imperfectly heard while giving her ear to a more interesting conversation.

They passed, at once, through a side door, and disappeared down the stairs. As for Arthur's companion she seemed unable to overcome the rebuff which the recent *épanchement* of her own heart had sustained, and colouring deeply she detached her arm, under the pretence of rearranging her shawl, and then joining a group of the party, who stood examining a piece of ancient furniture, she soon found for herself a more likely victim to the doctrines of philantrophy, which she wished to inculcate, in the

person of a heavy looking young German, who spoke French very imperfectly, and walked about with his hands behind his back, nervously wriggling the long sandy moustache upon his gross, sensual looking lip.

The next thing to be attended to, by the party, was the dinner, laid out tastefully under a large tent, pitched in one of the open grassy glades of the old forest.

"Where are my niece and Signior Morosini?" asked Monsieur De Malleville when the rest were ready to take their places at the extemporized dinner-table.

"I saw them in the gardens, the last time I looked out of the Palace windows," observed the German; "I dare say they are having what the lady I have been walking with calls an *épanchement* of hearts."

"*Mon Dieu, comme il est bête!*" muttered the Parisienne.

"Ah, ah, mademoiselle!" began two or three of the more elderly of the party, "it is

so that you have been instructing monsieur, is it?"

"Messieurs and mesdames," returned the little philanthropist, (giving Arthur incidentally a look, which said, as plainly as eyes could say it, "Do not you make matters worse for me, by adding any of your testimony regarding my doctrines,") "I can assure you, that monsieur does not understand one half that is said to him."

This bold *ruse* made the laugh recoil, and the German looked excessively foolish when it thus fell, unexpectedly, upon himself.

During this little scene, Aurélie and Morosini joined the diners in the tent. The repast was slight, but elegant, consisting chiefly of fruit and wines; it was therefore soon despatched. There was no heavy drinking on the part of the gentlemen, as is too frequently the case, on such occasions, in this country, when, towards the conclusion of the sylvan meal, glasses are smashed, the tops of Champagne bottles are knocked off,

and both the comfort and the dresses of the ladies present are endangered by the two or three Bacchanalians that are but too likely to be found in every such English company.

It had been arranged that as soon as the dinner was finished, the promenade through the forest should commence. It is a fine old place, and to the Englishman, escaping from the trim avenues of the gardens of Paris and Versailles, its wilder and more natural beauties are truly delightful.

In the momentary confusion of all preparing to quit the tent, Arthur found himself standing near to Aurélie, to whom he had, as yet, paid but very little attention during the day. As it happens hundreds of times, in similar circumstances, the two who were everything to one another, and to both of whom the hour and its amusements would have become insupportably dull had either been absent, appeared widely thrown asunder by a pretended mutual indifference, and much real consequent pique

and annoyance. It is, however, remarkable how slight a signal of concession, on either side, will bring about a better understanding between parties so placed. A word, a look even, is sometimes enough to alter the whole aspect of affairs, and to produce an offer of marriage and its acceptance within half-an-hour afterwards. In this case it was the woman, her heart unable any longer to continue the trying contest, who hoisted the white flag of surrender, by a single glance of her brilliant eyes, so full of love, tenderness, and pleading, to be rescued from her Italian captivity, that Arthur could not resist its power.

"Mademoiselle Aurélie," said he, "I have had very little of the pleasure of your company during the morning; if you will now bestow so great a favour on me, for a while, I am sure that my friend, Morosini, will summon up all his Roman fortitude to suffer a temporary separation from you. Am I not right signior?"

The Italian colored, and was going to appeal

to Aurélie herself to decide the question, when Monsieur de Malleville walked up to him, and placing his arm within his, said that he wished to have him for a time as his companion.

The sun was now setting over the verge of the green forest, and obtruding his oblique, golden beams into cool nooks and corners, from which his more meridian light and heat had been carefully excluded by the thick foliage of the old trees. The perspectives of the long glades, and narrower pathways, were peculiarly clear and transparent, the deep blue of the evening sky and the fresh green of the unscorched, shade-protected grass, coming gradually together, in the distances, with a decision and almost nakedness of contrast, unimpeded by any mellowing effects of rising mists or dew, singularly at variance with the evening views of our own more humid woodland scenery. The air was filled with the vibratory, indistinct buzzing of myriads of winged insects, sporting amid the languid leaves, that drooped in heavy

masses, overhead, as if exhausted by the day's intense heat. The delightful warble of our own native songsters, uniting into one swelling hymn of praise and adoration as the sun declines towards the horizon, was certainly wanting; but then, as if to compensate for the omission, the shy, love-lorn, impassioned nightingale poured forth at intervals, from his solitary, secluded bower, the full, increasing, bursting tide of his delirious joy—striking the ringing air with a succession of delicious notes, and calling out echo after echo, until a mile of the wide forest, around, seemed all alive with the same magnificent song.

It was in the calm that succeeded one of these wild tempests of harmony, that Aurélie turned to her companion, and said:—

"I wonder if the poets are correct in fancying that such songs afford relief to the over-full hearts that give birth to them?"

"What is your own opinion?" inquired

Arthur. "I would rather receive it than that of all the poets I have ever read."

"I think, that the theory is a true one, monsieur; and I like exceedingly to think so."

"But have you, mademoiselle, who are always so gay and animated, ever had a heart full enough to imagine what a blessing it may be to these birds thus to throw off the superabundance of their strong feelings?"

"I have read, or heard," replied Aurélie, looking up, "that the smiles of France cover more than is generally suspected."

"Ah," said Arthur, in answer to the arch manner in which his own remark, made to the little Parisienne, in the Palace, was repeated, "so you overheard our conversation just now, did you?"

"I did."

"And you thought my observation correct, even according to the experience of your own heart. You love then, mademoiselle, but your

love, like mine, is not a happy one, at present. There is some cloud hanging over it—or some impediment to its course, is it not so?"

The speaker employed a tone, in saying this, that considerably misled Aurélie, who at once came to the conclusion, that, under a little sort of dramatic disguise, in which what was being said might be read in two ways, for awhile, but would be understood in the right one, at last, Arthur and herself were now upon the very brink of mutual confessions of affection. She therefore replied, with a smile upon her face:—

"Yes, Monsieur, I admit that I am deeply, very deeply in love, but——"

She paused, with her bosom throbbing and her colour greatly heightened.

"Come," said Arthur, "I do not think we have quite comprehended each other's positions hitherto; let us sit down upon this bank, and confide our secrets, frankly, to one another."

"Will you swear to keep mine faithfully, as I shall yours?"

"That I will, Mademoiselle. You shall set the example of confidence; mine is rather a sad story, and should come last."

"Be it so; perhaps your relation of it, to me, may do you some good, Monsieur," returned Aurélie, with a pointedness of expression, that told, plainly, she fully anticipated, in her own mind, the *dénouement* of his tale.

"I am willing to make trial of the remedy, at any rate," replied her companion. "But, now commence. You say that you are in love; what is the grief, of which you have to complain, in connection with that circumstance?"

"That he whom I love, either cannot, or will not understand me, and that he may yet drive me to the painful and unusual course, of being the first to say, 'I love!'"

"Do you believe that he has any affection for you?"

"Really, Monsieur, what a question to ask one! Do you suppose me capable of enter-

taining a passion for any man living, unless I thought that he felt as much for me? It was by occasional signs of regard, on his part, that I was first led to love him."

"Then the fault must be on your own side, Mademoiselle, who have either given no signs in return, or such only as are unintelligible to him. Do you greatly love him?"

"Dearer, a thousand times, than my life! I am almost ashamed to tell you how much, but deeply, fervently, wildly—dearer than my relatives, than anything else on earth. I can never again even hope for a heaven, without him, I fear!"

"And you think that he is still ignorant of your strong affection for him? Surely you must have badly exhibited your feelings, then."

"I suppose so; yet I have done all that it is in my nature to do—I cannot grow sad or sentimental in his presence, nor sigh nor weep for him to bestow the mercy of his love upon me;

but if he can see at all, he must have perceived that I am always happiest, and doubly gay, when he is near me; that my cheek brightens at his coming, like the earth at the appearance of the sun; that my ears drink in, attentively, his slightest syllable; and that often, at his generous words, proud tears of applause and sympathy have rushed into my eyes without my being able to restrain them from betraying my feelings, at the time."

"He may have observed all this, and love you for it, too."

"Then he should tell me so!" replied Aurélie, fixing her dark, swimming, beautiful eyes fully upon those of her companion, "Why not tell me so at once he has it in his power to bless or curse me by his love or his neglect. Monsieur, it is now your turn to make me your confidant!"

And, again, strongly controlling her excitement, her old accustomed smile partially

returned, and played upon her quivering lip and moving countenance, like a beam of sunshine revisiting the surface of the ocean at the passing off of a summer storm.

The die was cast, and the seal set to the long pending fate, both of poor Morosini and Mary Wildman, by the concluding words and passionate manner of the young French girl. Arthur's vanity was touched, and his heart borne away by the scene.

"Aurélie—you must permit me to call you by that name now," said he, "it is useless for either of us to attempt to carry this disguise any further. I have had reasons for feigning, so long, to be unconscious of your feelings with regard to myself, but my mind is at last made up!"

"What, then," interrupted his companion, "have I, as I suspected, had to vanquish a rival for your love, Monsieur?"

"No, no rival," returned Arthur, "since

the only one living who could have proved so has never loved me as she ought."

"Perhaps," remarked Aurélie, "you have committed the same fault with respect to her, that you have recently charged me with—you have badly exhibited your feelings."

"Well, it may be so, but I will take more care for the future, and not be so misunderstood by you, depend on it, dearest Aurélie: your warmer and more generous love shall make amends to me for all. I will speak to Monsieur De Malleville in the morning, and if he consent to our union, the tidings of my having found, here, the most ample compensation for my loss, shall, at no distant day, find their way to England. France shall be the land of my adoption; and with her fair skies, and your far fairer face to smile on me, dearest, it will be hard, indeed, if a life of such happiness do not soon efface all remembrance of a more boyish passion."

"Is this pique now, or is it really love?" asked Aurélie. "I must see that I have won my victory fairly; and the more so, as my rival cannot, at present, help herself. Recollect, your promise once given to me, I will hear of no repentance, or my contempt will transcend all the love I have ever felt for you."

"Do not doubt me, dearest Aurélie; it is love the purest and most ardent, nay, more, it is a love of the deepest gratitude, since it has saved me from pangs of the bitterest misery. Your beauty dazzled my imagination, when first we met, but, at that time, I had given my heart to another, and a thousand old, fond associations bound me to her. All is now changed however—she has deceived me, and if you consent to pick me off the weltering, forlorn wreck of my former hopes, I shall cling to you with the life-long earnestness and thankful affection of one whom you have rescued from destruction."

"Well," said Aurélie, "I accept all that the simile imports. May it prove to be a truthful one!"

"It shall, rely on it, it shall; or let disappointment wait ever upon my after life!"

As the speaker uttered this vow, and was proceeding to make it fully binding in the usual way, by imprinting a kiss upon a pair of lips as ruby bright and rosy sweet as any in France, his eye caught sight of Morosini, walking rapidly away from the spot where they had been speaking, until his slim, frail figure disappeared within the shadow of the trees of the old forest.

"Poor fellow!" observed Aurélie, when her companion pointed him out to her, "I hope for his own sake he has not overheard our conversation. He is growing quite beside himself and childish, lately. As he has gone mad about me, I have not the heart to refuse to listen to him sometimes, and so, this morning, he made furious love to me, in the gardens of the Palace,

for above an hour. How shall I treat him in future? how inform him of our engagement?"

"There will be no need for you to do so—I am convinced he has discovered what has just taken place between us. But come, we must find out our other companions ere, our absence is observed by them."

That night, when Monsieur De Malleville returned home, in the best of spirits after the day's pleasure, he found the following letter, from his attorney at Marseilles, awaiting him:

"DEAR SIR,

"A new, unexpected and strange incident has, within the last two days, arisen in the prosecution of our suit: it has been formally signified to me by our opponents, that, in consequence of something which has just come to their knowledge, the fact of your legitimacy is to be brought in question. It is said, that a priest residing at Lyons, where

your mother, I believe, died, has on hearing of the public institution of the present proceedings, come forward with a certain signed statement, delivered to him by her, in which she alleges that you are merely her adopted son. This secret he was only to reveal in case of your ever being likely, in any way, to damage the interests of any other member of the family; and such probability, it is assumed, has now actually arisen, owing to a first cousin of yours being the wife of one of the opposing claimants; and hence the present disclosure. Of course, such a report as the above is one that can be easily met by sufficient proof on your part, and therefore I have to request that you will immediately furnish me with all necessary particulars, references &c. regarding the time and place of your birth.

"I remain, dear sir,

"Your obedient servant

"JACQUES PELTIER."

Monsieur De Malleville read this communication in his bed-room, and although he lay down to rest, as usual, he slept little, but kept revolving over and over, in his mind, the peculiarity of his position—taken by one to be a man supposed to have been murdered many years ago in England, and now, by other parties, denied to be the real son of his mother. It was a fact, that, from his earliest childhood, he remembered that it had always been remarked of him how very little he resembled his deceased younger brother, the father of Aurélie and Louise; indeed, while at school, he was frequently called, in joke, by his schoolfellows "the Englishman", so great a likeness was he thought, even then, to bear to the natives of that country. Now that his mind was, thus strangely, set to think over everything connected with his early life, he began to fancy, too, that it had sometimes struck him, while a boy, that his mother had invariably shown a marked and striking preference for his brother.

Moreover when, years afterwards, she was taken suddenly ill at Lyons, the latter only was, by her request, summoned in time to her bed side to receive her last blessing; and as to himself it greatly aggravated his grief, at losing her, to discover that, in consequence of the unaccountable delay in informing him of her alarming condition, he had only the melancholy consolation of following her remains to the tomb. All these circumstances taken now in connection with the mysterious resemblance between himself and the miniature, shown him by Arthur Maitland, threw Monsieur De Malleville, as may easily be imagined, into a state of doubt and confusion respecting himself, which was both painful and provoking to the highest degree.

He rose early, and sat down to give a long account of everything he knew, touching his birth and infancy, to his adviser at Marseilles, and it was just as he had concluded his dispatch, after some hours of recollection and writing,

that Arthur made his appearance before him, in the cabinet.

"You are come early, monsieur," began Monsieur De Malleville. "How did you enjoy yourself yesterday?"

"I have sought you this morning for the express purpose of telling you how much I did so, monsieur," replied Arthur, seizing on the words as affording him a good opportunity for entering upon the matter of his visit.

Monsieur De Malleville smiled.

"I am delighted that the day was agreeable to you."

"Monsieur De Malleville," said Arthur, "I only require one kind word from you, to enable me to make yesterday the commencement of a life of happiness. You may imagine, that received in your family as I have been, one member of it has become peculiarly dear to me—I mean your niece, Aurélie, to whom I have at length ventured to speak of my love; and I am

happy to say, that I find my affection is fully returned by her. May I, monsieur, hope that you will, in spite of my being a foreigner, give us your consent to our union?"

"*Mon ami*, I confess that some weeks back I was prepared to hear this from you; more recently, however, I abandoned the idea, and felt great anxiety about the future peace of mind of my dear niece, as, in spite of all her gaiety, she did not mislead me, upon the point of her love for you. You may, then, easily understand that your present overtures are extremely satisfactory to me."

And saying this Monsieur De Malleville embraced his future nephew, while he touched both his cheeks with his grey, rough moustache, in sign that he adopted him as a veritable *fils de la Maison.*

"I have explained to Aurélie," said Arthur, "the reasons for a line of conduct that must have appeared to her, and you, capricious and

inconsistent; but they are now for ever removed. I am happy again, and I trust you will both see me in a new light, henceforth."

"I understand, monsieur; yet let me hope that what you are now doing is perfectly honourable, and that in consenting to my niece's happiness, I am not sacrificing that of any one else whom you have met before."

"Fear not, sir; I assure you it is quite the other way; it is I who have been forgotten in England, and who alone have wounds to be healed."

"*Bon, bon, mon ami,* not another word on the subject; I doubt not but Aurélie will prove an excellent physician. She is an admirable girl, and carries a heart full of noble and generous feelings beneath a countenance of smiles that I have rarely seen dimmed, except by sympathy for the griefs of others. With her own troubles she has ever been a heroine from childhood, and little as even you may think it, monsieur, she owns a spirit that, if need were,

would struggle successfully for a martyr's crown. But *allons!* what am I doing? I ought not to be her panegyrist."

Godefroi entered the room, and announced that the miniature painter, who had had a sitting the previous day of Monsieur De Malleville, was waiting to be introduced for the continuance of his work. He was told to show him in immediately; and while, therefore, the painting proceeds, we have a few explanatory words to offer the reader, respecting the above letter of the attorney at Marseilles.

About a year before the time of which we are writing, a letter reached Monsieur De Malleville from Port Louis, in the Isle of France, acquainting him with the fact of his being entitled to a large sum of money, left to him, in the character of Madame Marie De Malleville's eldest son, by a gentleman named Lagrange, who had formerly known the family. The relations of the deceased resided at Marseilles, and were naturally jealous of so large a portion

of the property going from them. Instead of meeting Monsieur De Malleville in a proper spirit upon the subject, and trusting to his liberality to repair what they deemed the injustice of Monsieur Lagrange, these parties flew into a passion, and displayed so much violence, by using harsh language and insults against Monsieur De Malleville, that the latter resolved to take full advantage of the bequest in his favour, and therefore sent out an agent, with instructions to examine into the nature of the property and to watch over its disposal, in order that he might receive the very uttermost farthing of the money left to him. Months passed, and the will was quibbled at in every conceivable way; still, there appeared no chance of its directions being defeated, until the present charge of illegitimacy was brought forward against the obnoxious legatee. How this was attempted to be proved will appear in the sequel.

We may here return to the main current of

our story, and close this chapter by briefly stating, that, after a few more sittings, the artist completed a striking and most satisfactory portrait of Monsieur De Malleville, which was dispatched by Arthur Maitland to his friend, Lawson, without a day's delay.

CHAPTER II.

When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in batallions!

Hamlet.

POET. What have you there?
PAIN. A picture, sir.

Timon of Athens.

The reader will naturally suppose, that the discovery of the bones, and Lawson's subsequent report of his having seen Alick Wildman in Paris, threw the family of the Wildmans into great commotion and alarm. Such, how-

ever, was by no means the case, at least to the extent that might have been anticipated from the strange nature of the circumstances themselves. But there was sufficient reason for this apparent apathy in presence of events so startling. It was the daily and hourly increasing weight of pecuniary difficulties which repressed every other feeling, within the threshold of the once happy Knowle-water, Barton. Bills were multiplying, the wages of the farm labourers were in arrear, and above an entire year's rent was owing to Mr. Greville. Surrounded by these embarrassments, the old, buoyant, fearless spirit of the widow seemed to have deserted her, and in the hope of securing a fancied refuge from the storm for her daughter, certainly with no merely selfish views of providing for herself, she now clung with a kind of desperate fatuity to one solitary and comparatively unknown person—we mean Barrow. Upon him she learnt gradually to lean for support, in every new trial. He gave her his advice, paid

off five and ten pound debts, as they arose, asking for no other security for his money than a verbal promise of speedy repayment, and, finally, it was he who "pooh, pooh'd" down, in the hearing of his victim, all idea of her ever knowing anything more about her lost husband, either in connection with the remains which had just been dug up, or with the still more idle tale of Mr. Lawson.

Besides the misfortunes here alluded to, there were other and still greater ones already making their appearance. The slanderous poison which Barrow had introduced into the veins of the little society of the neighbourhood was beginning to circulate throughout it, in whispers of the most injurious kind concerning Mary and Arthur Maitland; yet, although the former could not fail to remark something like an altered manner shown towards her by many whom she had known from her childhood, she little suspected the real cause, but ascribed it entirely to the change in her mother's circum-

stances. The very peasants' wives and daughters treated her, she fancied, with less respect than they had been accustomed to pay her, hitherto.

As to young Wildman, his career appeared a headlong one to ruin; the widow having no longer any controul over his actions, but standing powerlessly apart with her hands pressed, as it were, tightly upon the eye of her mind, to shut out all sight of the coming danger, yet quailing with the full consciousness that the final shock of some great catastrophe could not be far off. Very different from this was the conduct of Barrow, who, chiefly through the agency of Ramsay, kept himself informed, with tolerable accuracy, of all the young man's smuggling liabilities. Among other matters, he knew, for instance, that he had recently raised money to the extent of between two and three hundred pounds, and, from other enquiries, he guessed pretty nearly whence this large sum had been obtained.

At length, the affairs of the unfortunate

Wildmans began to be more publicly talked of, and as it was known that the son, who had been holding various parish offices during the year, must have a considerable amount of parochial funds in his hands, an order was made, by the regular authorities, that he should be called on to produce his accounts, at the half yearly day, then close at hand. There was no intended harshness in this proceeding, since every friend to the family believed it was the only remaining way to put a stop to the mad games he was playing, and thus save him, and his mother and sister, from the utter destruction, to which they must otherwise be brought. It was hoped, that such an implied public censure and want of trust might operate powerfully where all other and more private considerations had long since lost their restraining influence.

Through all this complication of evils, Barrow appeared extraordinarily faithful in his unswerving attentions both to Mrs. Wildman and Mary; indeed, in his zeal, he rather over-

stepped the line of discretion, and, to the honor of the future magistrate be it spoken, our old friend Frankum was the first to take notice of the suspicious fact, and hence to question the motives of the amiable and benevolent gentleman.

"Hang me," said he, as he was riding one morning, in company with Ernest de Lisle and Major Grimshaw, "if I don't think the fellow is a sharper of some kind, after all. I thought at one time that I had wronged him by my suspicions, but upon my honor I am fast returning to my former opinion of him."

"When is Mr. Lawson to produce his likeness of the lost farmer?" asked De Lisle, "you manage these matters very easily in the country, Major."

"Ah yes," replied the latter, "I am aware that it must appear so, but the fact is, that, Lawson being our clerk, we have done all in our power to afford him an opportunity of drawing himself as decently as he can out of the very awkward position in which he has

placed himself and us, by his unheard of hallucination. However, be the consequences what they may to him, if he does not satisfy us that Wildman is really alive, by our next sitting day, we shall issue a fresh warrant for the arrest of Ramsay, and then the question about the skeleton will be properly examined. The coroner's inquest stands adjourned to that date, but will certainly come on then."

It was on this same day, that Mrs. Wildman made another, and she intended it to be a last, appeal to Mary, to induce her to listen to Barrow's oft urged, and detested offers of marriage.

It was a close, quiet, oppressive Summer's morning, and the irregular old farm-house lay baking in the scorching sunshine, that poured down upon its quaint, moss-tinted, slate roof, and ricketty stone chimnies, from a sky without a cloud, but of that peculiarly dull, yet glowing, leaden, suffocating hue, which foretells a thunder storm. The swallows twittered busily

beneath the eaves, within the shadow of which hung, in clusters, their mud nests, and the pigeons dozed heavily in the mouths of the holes made for them in the front wall of the building, overlooking the neglected flower garden, formerly so gay and well tended. A profound silence hanging over everything, and unbroken by the usual sounds of farm-life activity, appeared to sadden the very sunlight, as it danced and quivered, with a sort of pale lustre, upon the dusty, narrow window panes. The low, wide door stood open, without a person to enter it, while, within the dwelling, the necessary work was performed in something of that speechless gloom which marks the dismal presence of death, in a household. From cupboard to cupboard, now up stairs, and then down, moved the poor, cheerless, dispirited widow, jingling her keys, and drawing deep sighs, really doing little, but feeling unable to rest quiet any where, for ten minutes together. Mary, too, wretched and

miserable, was hard at work with her needle, by herself, in the best parlour, with the window open, the bees humming drowsily beneath it outside, and the sweet briar bushes peeping over the sill, and perfuming the room with their heavy, honied scent. There was much around her, that looked as it had always done, yet, alas! how different was the present from the happy past! The change was so complete, and had come so suddenly, that, at moments, her mind almost refused to realize its truth. It appeared to her more like a horrible dream than anything else. There seemed no adequate cause for the alteration, nothing sufficient to account for it. Only two facts presented themselves clearly to her reflection—Arthur Maitland's base desertion, and her brother's wild extravagance; and then opposed to these, stood out her own innocence and her mother's goodness. Did she deserve all that she was suffering? And, as she asked herself this question, from time to time, a fresh

tide of tears would seem to swell up, from her bosom, into her clear, soft eyes, and her fingers would ply the needle with a double rapidity, until dizzy and blinded by the overflowing current, she would be obliged to push her work hastily away from her, as the large drops rolled, like falling beads, into her lap. Then would come that dreamy calm, and vagueness of feeling, which naturally succeed to the wilder paroxysms of grief—in which state, her mind would slide off into forgetfulness of her real condition, and caught up by happier associations with the rays of sunshine, playing on the floor and walls, or with the wafted breath of the flowers, stealing in at the window, from the garden, her poor, mistaken, deceived heart, would begin again to send forth green buds of joy and gladness, and, with eyes wide open, she would sit and fancy that all was once more peace with her. But very brief were these illusions, which soon gave place to a reality, the

dreariness of which they had only served, tenfold, to increase.

"Oh, Arthur, Arthur," sighed Mary, after spending a long time in this melancholy, bitter brooding, "you did well, for your own sake, to cast me off, before these troubles arose; and yet, were you placed as I am, I would be the first, even now, to fly to your aid. Great as it might be, my anger would die away, as I saw your friends turn coldly from you. Could I any longer think of injuries, while the eyes which I once loved were filled with tears? No, my heart would forget all, except how fondly they had looked at me, in former days. How have you used me, Arthur?—you whom I still so foolishly and hopelessly love?—did you not leave me without cause, and insult me, afterwards, without excuse or justification? And yet, I would forgive you every thing, this moment, but that it would render me more deserving of pity, and your conduct less pardonable. My poor mother, too, and Edward—

but I cannot think of them! my heart will burst, if I attempt it. They talk of my marriage with Mr. Barrow, but, were it not for their sakes, I would rather die a thousand deaths than consent to be the wife of that man!"

Then rising from her seat, as she heard the familiar tread of her mother outside in the passage, she went to the door, and spoke to her: —

"My dear mother, you have been pacing about the house the whole morning; do come in and sit down with me—we can comfort each other, and our work will go on all the faster for it, by and bye."

The widow gladly accepted her daughter's invitation, as it gave her the opportunity she was wishing for, of speaking again to her of Barrow's proposals. After alluding to the constant dread which she felt, regarding the reckless proceedings of her son Edward, who was now absent from home, on one of those

secret and hazardous trips which he occasionally made in the "Petrel," when she was employed in bringing from abroad some of her most valuable cargoes, Mrs. Wildman thus entered upon the subject she had most at heart:—

"After all, my dear child, my chief anxiety is on your account, and it is therefore, Mary, that I never cease my persuasions to you to accept the comfortable home that is offered you."

"Mother," said Mary, speaking with great firmness, "you must not think only of me; there are yourself and Edward to be considered as well. Were I to marry Mr. Barrow, I should be taken from you, and perhaps removed to a great distance."

"Never mind us," pursued Mrs. Wildman, "if you were only provided for, and out of the reach of evil tongues, Mary. I am too old to care much what may happen to me, and, as to Edward, he will have brought the trouble upon himself and must suffer the punishment—I can

only, in his case, pray to God to make it as light as possible for him."

"Evil tongues, mother, what do you mean?" returned Mary, her eye losing its expression of sadness in one of kindling pride, as her figure shook off its air of drooping dejection and appeared to be, in a moment, inspired with new energy and power; "I need surely care little for anything that can be said; poverty is no crime, and hard work will be no dishonour, even should I be obliged to engage in it, especially, dear mother, if, by my labour, I can add, however slightly, to your comforts, and be near at hand to console you when the hour of trial comes."

"Bless you, my child, God bless you!" exclaimed the poor widow, taking her daughter's two hands in hers, and sobbing aloud in her grief, "I wish it were as you say; but, alas! there are slanders already in circulation about you—"

"About me—do you say, mother?"

"About you, Mary, and Arthur Maitland;" and the speaker explained the nature of the letter which Barrow had shown her, adding as she concluded: "Oh, my dear Mary, marry him—he is powerful, and will be able to chastise your traducers."

The girl stood still considering, for a few seconds, with flushed cheeks and a knitted brow, and then, as if a light had suddenly broken in upon her mind, she said:

"And since he showed you that letter, mother, has he again expressed his desire to marry me?"

"Repeatedly, dear Mary, repeatedly!"

"Then, mother," returned the latter, in quick, excited tones, "if he is mean enough to choose as his wife one whose honour and purity are in doubt, he may have been sufficiently dishonourable and base to have helped in propagating the slanders against her. At any rate, I will not trust my defence to Mr. Barrow. There are those who know me better, to whom

I will first appeal. I will go directly to Mr. Greville, and ask his advice how to act."

"Mary, Mary, Mr. Greville cannot help us; I owe him already a whole year's rent, and, do not, therefore, I entreat you, lose for us a much more powerful friend!"

"I tell you, mother," said the girl, "that for once I must disobey you; I will not be beholden to Mr. Barrow for a patched up character. If I must marry him, it shall be under no debt of gratitude for his rescuing me from disgrace."

The discussion was here interrupted by the well known voice of a neighbouring farmer, inquiring without, in the kitchen, if Mrs. Wildman was at home—a question which the widow hastened to answer for herself, leaving Mary again alone.

"Good day, ma'am," began the visitor, "I have just called to say, that there was an order passed at the parish meeting, yesterday, for your son, Ned, to produce his accounts and

collected cash, next Monday. 'Tis intended quite kindly, I assure you, and I hope, poor fellow, he will take the hint, and that it may be a good thing for all of you, Mrs. Wildman."

"Ah thank God, neighbour," returned the widow, "however headlong and unfortunate he may be in making away with the most of our own hard earnings, I trust that he is still honest with other people's money. Yes, yes, poor fellow, the parish collections he has all safely deposited with me, and as he is from home, I will at once deliver the books, and the cash, into your hands."

The farmer said he did not require that, but still, if she requested it, he would not object to take charge of the money until the appointed day, when it should duly be given to the proper persons to receive it. In another minute, Mrs. Wildman was hastily unlocking an old fashioned desk in the parlour, in order to take from it the roll of bank notes and loose gold

which she had seen carefully counted and deposited therein.

"Mary, Mary!" she exclaimed, on opening one of the small drawers which were placed within, "for God's sake, Mary, what has become of the parish money?"

"I am sure I don't know," said Mary, feeling as if a fresh dagger had entered her heart, "Edward was the last person who had the key, the day before he left home."

The widow sank down upon the nearest chair, with her hands trembling violently, and her face as pale as death itself. The son and brother then was—a thief! And the mother and sister had now the terrible task imposed upon them of concealing his guilt!

"Must the money be paid immediately?" inquired Mary in breathless anxiety and alarm.

"I said it should be," replied her mother, "but Monday is the day appointed for its reception by the Parish."

The girl darted to the door, checked herself,

an instant, to press her handkerchief tightly to her eyes, to send back the starting tears, then hastily smoothed her glossy hair, and went out, with the best countenance she could summon up for the occasion, to meet the farmer.

"Mr. Jobson," she said, "I have persuaded my mother to delay paying the money until Monday. Edward may return by that time; at any rate it will, perhaps, be as well to wait and see if he does so."

"By all means, Miss Mary," replied the man; "indeed I have no authority to receive the money now, and if I had taken it, it would only have been just to oblige your mother, you see, Miss. Good morning; I'll say it is all right, and that the cash will be forthcoming on Monday."

"Do so, if you please," and again Mary returned to her mother.

"Is he gone?" asked the latter, staring into the girl's face, as though she herself, instead of her son, had been the guilty party.

"Yes, mother."

"But Monday will soon come round, Mary, and then the money must be paid or—. Oh! my poor dear child, it may sound almost like asking you to sell yourself, after what you said just now, yet with you alone rests the power of saving us from this cruel disgrace, and your brother, it may be, from what is worse. Go, go, my dear Mary, to Mr. Barrow, and ask him to lend us a hundred pounds, and say—"

"That I will marry him if he does," interposed the daughter. Then advancing close to the widow, and looking in her face with eyes no longer tearful but which appeared, somehow, to have grown calm and almost stern in their deep expression, she said, "mother, do not esteem me selfish if I seem still to hesitate in making the sacrifice of my feelings which you desire. Had this occurred an hour ago, before I knew of the dishonour that is attempted to be cast upon me, I should have considered the yielding up of my own future happiness a cheap price to

pay for the character and safety of my brother; but now that cannot be, until I have first vindicated my own innocence. Trust to me, to do all in my power; I will save Edward if I can, but it shall never be by the unclean sacrifice of a spotted reputation."

Mary hastened on her bonnet and shawl and left the house. She had a comsiderable distance to walk before reaching Barrow's cottage, and the afternoon air was heavy and sulphurous. Occasionally, a few large drops of rain fell upon the dusty road, as the distant rumbling sound of thunder caught her ear. The long pending storm seemed coming at last, but though heated and faint, the girl proceeded on her errand.

In his little rural lodging, overlooking the sea, sat, at this hour of the day, Matthew Barrow, some papers with the word "copy" written on them, laying on the table before him, while in his hand he held an open spyglass. Away, upon the horizon of waters, were faintly visible the dim sails of several small

vessels, towards which, from time to time, he directed his attention, as he threw up the window sash and brought his glass to bear upon them.

The venetian blind was lowered half way down the casement, and some flowering plants occupied a position on the ledge outside, so that Barrow, standing within, could carry on his observations unnoticed by his curious neighbours, by whom his doings had been watched rather pryingly, of late, to his great annoyance.

"Not yet," said he to himself; "no, no, they will hardly heave in sight until after sunset, I should think."

And then returning to the table, he would again cast his eye upon the papers alluded to, and soliloquize in something like the following terms:—

"Yes, this is a prize worth playing a bold game for, to say nothing of the girl's beauty. May she not, by-and-bye, thank me for restoring her to her own, even though she is compelled to share her good fortune with a husband

not of her own choice? Her mother is, at this hour, in the last extremities of pecuniary embarrassment. It was to-day she was to be called on, by the parish, in respect to her son's accounts, and, at any moment, she may come running to me to rescue them from ruin and disgrace. My pretty Mary will hardly resist that last and mighty persuasion! Ramsay, too, I have worked up to my purpose. Yes, I have laid my plans well! Out of a very brief explanation given me by Watson, and half an hour's conversation with crazy Kate after her recovery, in her cottage, on Christmas eve, I have woven a net which puts them all in my power! Yet I have staked high, too, for my chance of winning. My signature to the paper, which first made Ramsay my slave, would be dangerous in case of any failure. No matter, I played an effectual card at the time, and it has almost won the game for me. Ramsay, it is clear, can never betray me, unless he should first see himself lost, and that is not now likely, as to night's

work will remove all real evidence against him. When that is accomplished, the written bond between us shall be destroyed, and I shall have the remainder of the play all to myself, without any further risk! Mr. Hammond, I tell you that your interest, in the originals of these papers, is notworth six months' purchase to you! Ay, you shall now soon have my answer to your proposals, made to me the other day in London, for purchasing a fresh term for your hereditary secret!"

As he concluded these reflections, Barrow locked up the copies of Mr. Hammond's title deeds, supplied to him by his friend Watson, again seized the spy-glass, and going to the window, was soon absorbed in a minute and careful re-examination of every inch of the sea's surface that came within his view.

It was while he was so occupied, that Mary Wildman arrived at his dwelling. He saw her coming up to the little door, and knew, immediately, how urgent must be her business,

since it had brought her to his bachelor roof, unattended. The nature of her errand, there, he could also pretty nearly guess, and being desirous of beginning their interview with every possible advantage in his favour, he, with admirable tact and delicacy, put on his hat, and going himself to answer her knock, proposed hearing what she had to say to him as they walked, together, towards his favourite spot for obtaining an uninterrupted view of the bay, which was a high hill, crowned by the crumbling ruins of an old windmill.

"Now, then, Miss Wildman," said Barrow, as soon as they had quitted the road, to go across some fields, in order to reach the place by the nearest cut, "will you inform me to what circumstance I am indebted for the pleasure of this visit?"

"Mr. Barrow," replied Mary, in accents firmer than he had ever, hitherto, heard her employ, "once before, when a sudden call for money was made upon my mother, which

she could not meet, you were kind enough to help her; she is now similarly situated, and——"

"You speak only of your mother," said Barrow, in a voice of well-feigned tenderness; "I trust you have not forgotten that it was you to whom I sent the money."

"I have not," returned Mary, "nor the seemingly disinterested and noble spirit of the letter which accompanied it. Have you since acted up to all you then expressed, Mr. Barrow?"

"Miss Wildman," said the latter, feeling that his long worn mask was not without flaws in it, "I will confess, that believing you had rejected my offers on account of my age, and because you did not sufficiently know me, I had still hopes, after rendering you so essential a service, your feelings towards me might change."

"Then you adopted a piece of the greatest hypocrisy to entrap me into a debt of grati-

tude which you knew I could never repay, except in one way! Remember, you began your letter to me by saying that you did not desire to see me alter the determination to which I had come. Lending under false pretences, in such cases, is as bad as borrowing under false pretences. I ask you, if I am not acquitted of all obligation for an act so performed?"

"Granted, Miss Wildman; I speak to you of no obligation."

"Very good," replied Mary; "then I may now address you independently, and you can accept or reject the terms I am going to propose to you, as you may see best, in your own judgment."

"Let them be never so hard, if they give me a chance of winning your regard, I will not complain of them," answered Barrow.

"They are, then, that you shall lend my mother the money which she at present requires, and clear my character from the slan-

ders that are in circulation respecting it. You have a letter in your possession containing them, I hear; and in order that you may have the right to act in my defence, I am willing now, to engage to become your wife, as soon as my honour is fully vindicated. Do you agree to what I propose?"

"My dear Miss Wildman, there is, I fear, no detecting the false tongue. Besides, you need nothing but a marriage with me, to repudiate such idle whispers."

"Thank you, Mr. Barrow," replied Mary, "I desire a respectability of my own, independently of any one else."

"But how would you have me proceed?"

"That I leave to your own discretion. Do you consent?"

"Can she suspect me?" thought Barrow. "At any rate, she is counter-working me with my own weapons at present; but I have one chance more; when to-morrow, she hears the fate of her brother, she will think more of

his reputation than of her own, and, to save his memory from disgrace, she may gladly listen to my offers, without these clogging conditions."

Then speaking aloud, he said:—

"What sum of money does your mother require, Miss Wildman?"

"A hundred pounds," she replied.

"I cannot give you a check for so large an amount at present, but I shall be at the bank to-day, and will make arrangements for procuring it. To-morrow, then, I shall be in a condition to meet your proposal, one way or the other. Shall we return towards your home now? The sky is again darkening; I think the threatened storm is not very distant."

Barrow wished to accompany Mary part of the way back to Knowle-water, but she refused to allow him, and set off homewards, alone. A dim, confused sense had been growing up in her mind, ever since the morning's conversation

with her mother, that he was, somehow, at the bottom of all her troubles.

"Oh!" thought she, "what happiness if it should turn out that, after all, Arthur Maitland still loves me! But no, that is impossible, or he would never have sent me such an insulting letter. Well, no matter, what I have done will prove who have been my enemies, and I feel sure that Barrow, in spite of his making me these odious offers of marriage, is among them. God grant he may be the only one!"

She had not proceeded far on her road when she was overtaken by Frankum, who was just returning home, on horseback, from Ackworth Hall. Dismounting, he passed the rein over his arm, and as usual began conversing familiarly with her, when Mary, feeling that he already knew a great part of her troubles, and assured of his interest and sympathy in all that concerned her happiness, fully related to him the events of the day, taking care, however, not

to say what was the nature of the pressing emergency which had compelled her to ask a fresh loan of Barrow.

"'Pon my honour Mary," exclaimed Frankum when she had finished speaking, "you are a girl of a thousand. I have also heard what is being said of you, but although I knew you were innocent, I saw no possible way of defending you. Your own plan, however, is excellent, and will soon prove whether the fellow is your friend or your foe. For myself, as I was saying this morning to Major Grimshaw and Mr. De Lisle, I have again come to the conclusion that Barrow is a great scoundrel; and now that he sees you begin to suspect him, I no more believe that he will bring you the money than I do that I am going to fly to heaven this instant. However, keep up your courage; I think I can raise as much as your mother requires, and if so, I will bring it you to-morrow at—let me see, how soon do you need it?"

"Oh, as early as possible!" replied Mary,

"and thank you, a thousand times, for your offer to help us if you can."

"I will be with you by twelve o'clock then," said Frankum. "Good bye, it will all be right yet, depend upon it, Mary."

When Mary, a quarter of an hour afterwards, reached the farm, she found it in a state very unlike to the almost painful quietude which reigned there when she quitted it, sometime previously. Mr. Greville and Mr. Lawson were with the widow, who appeared to be just recovering from feelings of strong excitement. There were the traces of recent tears upon her face; her close cap was untied, allowing a few of her grey locks to escape beneath its white crimped border, and the room had an odour of vinegar and water, which led at once to the supposition that they had been bathing her forehead and temples with that simple restorative. As the girl entered, her mother started up in the arm chair, in which she was reclining, and glancing rapidly round at her, stretched her

hand towards Lawson, saying as she did so, "Give it me, let me look again upon it. Here, Mary, come quickly; here is your dear father still alive."

"Oh! Mr. Greville," exclaimed Mary, looking from the wild gaze of the speaker to him for some explanation, "what has happened? Is my mother ill? mother, my dear mother, what can you mean?"

"Be steady," returned the old clergyman, "I know you to be a sensible girl; your mother will soon be herself again—she is not ill, though greatly surprised and overcome, for a time. You remember that Mr. Lawson said, on his return from Paris, that he had seen your father; he has now brought us a portrait of the gentleman whose face has misled him, and it seems to have produced the same effect upon all of us."

"Mr. Greville, Mr. Greville," broke in the widow, "if that is not my poor Alick, I never saw him in my life."

Mary took up the portrait, and as she looked upon the fine, honest, good-tempered features, there appeared to her an expression on them so like what she instinctively felt the expression of her father must have been—the eyes of the picture seemed, somehow, so dimly, yet withal so strangely like her own, and the mouth, (as far as the moustache allowed it to be seen) the chin and the forehead, so much resembled the same features in her brother Edward, that her heart throbbed violently against her side, and her knees shook under her, at the strength of the new and undefined emotions that, in a moment, filled her bosom.

"Well," said Lawson turning to Mr. Greville, "I think, after all this, that my hallucination, as it has been everywhere called, is an exceedingly excusable one, even if it should prove to be nothing more."

"I confess," replied Mr. Greville, "that it is a most mysterious matter; and this is now certain, that the magistrates dare not proceed with

their investigations until they have found some means of bringing the original of that portrait before them."

In the course of the evening, Major Grimshaw and Mr. Fallow had the picture shown to them, and immediately each of them, in his own characteristic way, expressed the most utter astonishment at the mysterious resemblance which it bore to a man whom they remembered so well as poor Wildman. Mr. Maitland was, at the time, too unwell to be interrupted by business of a character so exciting as this would be likely to prove to him, and his valuable testimony in the matter was therefore wanting. Many other persons, however, who had been most sceptical on the point, when first Lawson's report got abroad, now, on seeing the portrait, joined at once in the new faith, the very strangeness of which made it spread throughout the neighbourhood with more the rapidity of an epidemic superstition than of a well authenticated truth.

The result of all was, that the next day, Lawson, being furnished with a sufficient number of affidavits, on the subject, not only to satisfy the mind of Monsieur De Malleville that his presence in England was really necessary, to solve the doubts which had, however oddly, arisen there respecting his identity, but also to induce the English ambassador in Paris to move in the matter, should the mysterious Frenchman require any more weighty persuasions than Lawson himself, thus accredited, had to offer, he again set out for France, leaving every one at Knowle-water, and in its vicinity, in a state of the deepest excitement and suspense.

CHAPTER III.

O, God! have mercy, in this dreadful hour,
On the poor mariner!———

SOUTHEY.

He, ocean deep,
Now lies at rest. Be thou her conforter,
Who art the widow's friend!

IBID.

WE must here turn back with our story to the previous day, when Barrow parted from Mary Wildman.

As from below a dark bank of heavy clouds, in the west, the sinking sun appeared, for a few minutes, resting the lower rim of its lurid,

diminished orb upon the sea, and shedding a radiating flood of watery beams across the waves; a long, narrow tract of which was thus lighted up into a hue of pale, sickly green, strongly contrasted with the more murky and stormier tint of the swelling expanse around, a numerous fleet of fishing boats, with their white sails filled by a gale that was, as yet, but fitfully felt on land, was to be seen hastening towards a little harbour on the coast of the Bristol Channel. On the other hand, the larger craft, which had been standing in near to the shore, during the day, appeared doing all in their power to beat outwards, into the greater freedom of the wide Atlantic, which lay before them.

The tide was rising, and along the winding beach—frowned upon by tall cliffs, and strewn over, or rather paved with smooth pebbles, of enormous size, the concussion among which, at each temporary recoil of the surging sea, somewhat resembled the quick, sharp, running dis-

charge of a line of musketry—vast, mighty, and resistless waves, each of them half a mile in length, and crested with foam, now fell, at intervals, with the heavy sound of breaking thunder, from the nearing rumble of which, indeed, the echoes sent back by the deep caverns, on the coast, were scarcely separable.

The sun dipped beneath the horizon; the harbour that had been so still and dull, since the fishermen left it, in the morning, became all alive by the return of the boats, and rough voices were to be heard calling out, here and there, as the nets and fish were landed, the sails lowered, and the anchors dropped, "Stand clear, there,"—"Bear a hand, my lads,"—"Haul away," and a hundred other such salt water terms. The old, ricketty, wooden pier head, was crowded with women and children, to welcome their husbands and fathers home; for, to the eyes of those experienced dwellers by "the great deep," it was plain that the

storm, which had been so long brewing, was at length upon the point of bursting forth, in all its might and fury. Towards the inner portion of the bay, the water, heaving in a mass, as if forced from beneath, was still smooth upon the surface, except, now and then, when a gasp of the rising gale made it shiver, for a second or two, in broad patches, or a few immense spats of rain dropped, at considerable distances apart, upon its glassy, mirror-like face, and their centrifugal circles went widening off, until they all united, and again softened down into unruffled transparency. But, although such was, as yet, the calm aspect of things near the land, in from the open sea was to be seen advancing, over the darkening waters, that ominous, low, black line of tempest, which sailors, even in mid-ocean dread, as they perceive it creeping on, with gloomy stealth, towards their frail, solitary, exposed bark.

It was at about this hour, that the "Petrel," commanded by Dick Morrison, freighted with

with a rich cargo of French brandy, and with young Wildman, on board in addition to her own crew, crowded on every inch of canvass she had to hoist, and steered in towards a particular point, on the coast, not very remote from the little haven to which we have been alluding, but separated from it by a deep, round-headed projection of the land. It was a kind of bay within a bay, and the most secluded spot to be met with, for miles, along the borders of the Channel. The entrance to this natural harbour was somewhat narrow, and defended by a sunken reef of black, sharp-pointed rocks, but, within, it formed a kind of sheltered, hollow basin, of considerable size, with a beach of soft, yellow sand, running gently inwards, until it became lost in some grassy slopes descending from the opening of a deep valley, between two woods. Over the dangerous bar to this most convenient place for the purposes of smuggling, a vessel of light tonnage might safely venture when the tide had risen to a certain height;

and the captain of the "Petrel," having made accurate soundings of the depth of water, and furnished his co-adjutors on shore with correct means of marking it, he had been enabled to land many a valuable cargo right under the nose, as it were, of the preventive service people, without their ever once suspecting where he had effected his purpose. The system was, to have a careful and trustworthy person, stationed on the margin of the little harbour, fully instructed in the marks that had been laid down for ascertaining the height of the tide, upon the reef, at any moment. When the passage was practicable, this person made an understood signal, and the cutter, immediately, bore up and entered. The small kegs of spirits were rolled on shore by means of an inclined plank, and the vessel was, again, towed out to sea, before the ebb rendered her return impossible. Above a dozen times had "bold Dick," as his friends called him, succesfully played this game, Ramsay always acting

as the signaller; and it was this same manœuvre which, in spite, nay, under cover of the coming storm, that he was again bent on trying, on the occasion we are now describing. He knew, that having made his favourite port, and got rid of his smuggled goods (which he would be sure to do, as the signal was never made unless there were sufficient assistance at hand to carry off what he had to land), he might, in case of the weather preventing him from again reaching the sea, before the reef became too exposed, lie safely by, and wait for the return of the next tide. Having given this brief but necessary explanation, let us resume our narrative.

Ramsay was at his post, preparing to make the usual signals to the smuggler. The darkness of night had almost fallen upon the scene, but broad and vivid flashes of lightning, from time to time, lighted up the bay, all around, and displayed a line of foam stretching across its mouth, which marked out the position of the

sunken reef. The rain was pouring in torrents, and the wind increasing, every minute. Barrow, wrapped in his waterproof coat, joined his companion.

"Do we now understand each other, Isaac?" said he, coming forward, and extending his hand to Ramsay.

"Ay, I suppose so; and yet I fear to do it," was the growled reply of the other.

"Rather be afraid not to do it, my old friend," said Barrow; and, as he spoke, the sheeted lightning appeared to cling around his tall form, in a manner that, for a moment, made him look so supernatural that Ramsay started backwards a pace or two from him. "What alarmed even at the lightning?"

"I am more afraid of you," returned the old man.

"Of me, Isaac—your only friend on earth?" said his companion. "Mark you, there is but one man living whom you need fear, and he is, now, within your power. You have spent

many years in mortal terror of discovery, Ramsay, a terror which you have, often, endeavoured, vainly, to drown in drink; there is, now, the sea before you to wash out all future qualms from your mind, and will you not use it? Those bones, the mere sight of which, the other day, wasted years of your remaining life, are tongueless of themselves, but if you allow yonder witness to escape," (pointing towards the sea) "they will, every one of them, find voices, and increase the terrible evidence against you."

"But if you should desert me?" said Ramsay, half inquiringly, in a tone of infirmity which showed, plainly, how much the former stern resolution of the speaker had recently broken down.

"You know, well enough, Isaac, that I cannot do so," replied Barrow in earnest, reassuring accents; "when we first met, I, for purposes of my own, bound myself to you, at the risk of life, in a manner, that, for my own

safety, obliges me to watch over yours, also. You have in your possession a document, written and signed by me, which, if you were going to the gallows to-morrow, you would be sure to deliver up, and it might drag me there after you. You can, then, neither fear nor suspect me; but when the work of to-night is completed, the paper I speak of must be destroyed, and we shall part, for ever, in mutual safety and with mutual gratitude. All danger of your crime being detected will have been removed, and my object attained. Now are you ready?"

"Well, if it must be so," answered his companion.

"Time your signal well, then," returned Barrow, "so that there be no mistake. I will remove to a distance, and observe how your skill succeeds."

"Oh, as to that," said Ramsay, "with a wind like this, blowing dead in shore, she will break

up as easily as an egg shell, when she strikes the black reef, there."

They parted, and Ramsay quickly gave the required signal, by setting fire to some inflammable matter, which he produced from his pocket, through the assistance of a dark lantern, with which he was, also, provided. The flame shot upwards, and then bent and wavered in the wind, brilliantly illuminating, for a few seconds, the grey head of the crag of rock on which it burned.

For some time, the "Petrel", then gradually nearing the land, had been flitting to and fro, like a spectre, amid the mists of the driving rain that swept over the surface of the waters. She was an admirable sea boat, and with able management could be kept beating up into the very eye of the wind, unless it happened to blow a downright gale, for hours together, without any fear of her driving in upon a lee shore.

At the moment when the red, warning light

shone out across the dark rolling waves, from the cliff, Dick Morrison was engaged in earnest conversation with young Wildman, on the deck of the cutter.

"Ay, sir," said he, "I have now made a clean breast of it to you, and whether they hang or acquit me I care but little; 'though, remember, I am quite innocent of any participation in the crime. The old fellow has never recognized me since, and has always been faithful to us all, in this smuggling business; but I can't hold out any longer in screening him, and we must now meet our fate together."

He was about to continue speaking, but, at this stage of his startling and terrible narrative, the well known blaze, from the shore, caught his eye, and, turning quickly round, he called out, in a loud voice, to the men:

"Holloa there my lads, what the devil does that mean? there's our signal shining for us an hour sooner than I expected it. Come, bear a hand and heave her about; I suppose this wind

off the sea has made the tide rise faster than usual, to-night, and so they are expecting us. Now then, about she goes, and God send us, once more, good luck!"

As the captain thus spoke, the slack sails flapped in the gale, and the next minute the head of the vessel was pointing towards the land. How straight, and swiftly she sped along, through the thick gloom which lay upon the tossing waters, the strong wind blowing directly aft, her large main-sail standing out nearly at right angles with her keel, like an immense wing, and the slender mast bent and creaking under the mighty pressure! And, now, close before the devoted bark, rose the high, frowning cliffs, right and left, guarding the narrow entrance to the little bay, all darkened by their overcasting shadows. The anxious, silent crew stood ready to haul down the sails, and to drop a couple of large anchors, as soon as she should pass the reef. In another instant, a man, stationed at the bow, sang out, in alarm, that

they had been betrayed—the boiling, foamy breakers were still upon the bar. Dreadful moment!

"Down with the sails, let go the anchors!" called one.

The captain sprang forward, and his quick eye took in, at a glance, the impossibility of saving the vessel by such means.

"It is too late!" his answering, powerful voice replied.

The words reached the ear of Barrow, as he cowered in one of the concealing clefts of the rocks, and he chuckled to himself, like a demon laughing at the last agonies of a lost soul.

"It is too late! we must force her over, my lads, or perish!"

The resolution was scarcely taken, all hands on board holding in their breath with trembling fear, when the poor "Petrel" ran upon the fatal barrier with a tremendous crash, which, at first, lifted her shivered, staved in bows, almost clear out of the water, and then sent her

reeling backwards, until the weight of waves swept over the stern, washing away the man at the wheel, and completely burying the after part of the deck with a rushing surface of foam and spray. There was a momentary pause, as a kind of dull, vibratory, quivering motion ran throughout the frame and rigging of the little bark. The crew, in agony, looked around them for help, but there was none at hand, not so much as a plank or a detached spar to which to cling, and the vessel seemed going down, at once, by the stern. Presently, however, the wind partially refilled the emptied sails, the washed stern again floated upon the waters, and there appeared, yet, some chance of saving her. Alas! how fallacious was the hope! The poor thing moved forward, once more, it is true, but there was a gurgling, rushing sound of waters, and a rapid sinking towards the bows, that told, but too plainly, where she was going. Ere there was well time for thought, the bowsprit disappeared, the flapping jib was sucked

down after it, and, foot by foot, the trim built, rakish form of the "Petrel" subsided into the yawning gulf that awaited her, the frantic, hissing waves curling in, also, to fill up the pit where she sank, and then, as they completed their work, springing aloft in a white, gleaming, smoking column, as if madly dancing upon her grave.

The scene, thus attempted to be brought before the mind of the reader, had not long terminated when those who were to have conveyed away the smuggled booty from the shore, arrived, one by one, at the appointed spot, with their trusty horses and pack saddles, prepared for engaging in their contraband traffic. All was dark and silent around, and nothing was to be heard but the hoarse roar of the sea, and the howling of the wind among the trees, drooping their hardy branches over the torn, and jagged cliffs, along the coast.

Barrow again breathed freely, and his heart was at ease: the most critical part of his diabol-

ical scheme appeared to him to have succeeded; but there was one strong and fortunate swimmer, at that very moment, clinging to a ledge of rock, at no great distance from the scene of the late wreck, destined to be saved by an avenging Providence, and to re-appear, from out the horrors of that terrible hour, for the final defeat of all his miserable hopes. Dick Morrison was still alive.

CHAPTER IV.

What, do you glare? Is't not enough that all
Do fear and fly me: must you too, alas!
Shrink as an adder stung you? Oh! do look
But kindly on me ere I go: perhaps
We shall not meet again; and 'tis not thus
(Albeit I'm lost) the Father and his child
Should part.

Barry Cornwall.—Werner.

On the following morning, Isaac Ramsay, still thinking more of his old than of his recent crime, quitted his abode to seek out crazy Kate, in her solitary cottage. Yet, the new terror of

his over night's work had had its full effect, too, upon his sinking frame, however unconscious he might be of the fact; and as he tottered onwards, feebly supporting himself on his unsteady staff, which he clutched with a withered, burning hand, he appeared, almost, more dead than alive.

"I shall now escape the dog's death they have so long wished for me," he muttered; "I shall die unmolested in my own bed, at last!" and as he thus soliloquized, the faint words seemed to stick in his parched throat, and he halted to gasp for breath, ere he proceeded. "If Barrow is not deceiving me, and the old woman knows no more than the captain of the "Petrel" told her, on that night at the hut, I am safe, since it must have been he who was with me when I did it; and his tongue I have silenced, for ever, in the sea. They cannot hang me upon the silly evidence of a dreaming old witch. But I will see her myself, and find

out if she has, still, any more tales to tell against me!"

When Ramsay, in pursuance of this resolution, reached the cottage, he found Kate stretched upon the bed which she was never more to leave, alive. He walked forward to where she lay and seated himself on the low chair, fixing his sunken, grey eyes full upon her face.

"Isaac," said she, returning his gaze, steadily and without a shudder, "if your errand here is for the purpose of frightening me, you have come too late; I am now beyond your power. Hasten to make peace, if you can, with your offended God; for not long after death has released me, your hidden guilt will find you out."

"Kate Morrison," returned Ramsay, forcing a contemptuous smile to his thin, quivering lips, "think you, that the chance finding of a few dry bones has any terrors for me?"

"Perhaps not," answered the old woman,

"but there is a living witness against you, yet to come, who only waits until I am removed to appear again."

"Who do you mean?" gasped Ramsay.

"He who was in this cottage with me, on Christmas eve, Isaac. He who is——"

"That man, who was the captain of the 'Petrel' smuggling vessel," broke in her companion, "died last night, and all his lies about me have perished with him, thank God!"

"Then you have had a hand in his death!" exclaimed the dying woman, starting up in her bed.

Ramsay, also, sprang from his seat, and raised his stick. The door opened, and Dick Morrison—his black hair hanging thick and matted over his brow, dressed in his sailor's striped, woollen frock, and his face pale and haggard—stood within the dwelling.

"Avast, there, you grey-headed old villain," said the new comer.

Kate uttered a wild cry, as she stretched forth both her hands.

"What!" pursued Morrison, seizing Ramsay by the collar, and thrusting him down upon the chair, "have you not, yet, had enough of murder, but you must try to slay son and mother into the bargain?"

"Dick! Dick!" again exclaimed Kate.

"Peace, mother! I will speak to you, presently—this murderous, treacherous old sinner, by a false signal, given, last night, upon the coast, has shipwrecked me, and lost the lives of all my companions, for which, even though he were my own father, as you once tried to persuade me, I would still——"

And the powerful fingers of the speaker were laid upon the throat of Ramsay, when Kate, by a mortal effort, stretched herself sufficiently far over the side of the bed, to arrest his arm.

"Spare him, Dick, spare him, but a little

while, till you have heard me speak, once more. Again, I swear to you, as I hope all my sins to be forgiven me, that he, Isaac Ramsay, IS your father!"

Morrison paused, and looked from one to the other, his eyes flashing, and his deep, broad chest, heaving with a storm of wild emotions. Ramsay's jaw had dropped from its accustomed firm and rigid expression, and it was with great difficulty, that he could find strength to ask, in a faltering, hollow voice:—

"Kate Morrison, is this all true?"

"As true, Isaac, as there is a God above!"

"Then I am lost!"

And his grey head sunk, heavily, upon his bosom—upon that bosom which, thus, yielded up the fatal secret that had lain there, amid the consuming fires of remorse, fear, and agony, for so many dreary years.

After an interval of some considerable duration, Dick Morrison was the first to speak again:—

"Mother," said he, "this is the second time that I have returned here to clear up, in the eyes of the world, the long mystery of poor Wildman's disappearance; but he (pointing towards the old man,) must not *now* die through any testimony of mine. Ramsay—Isaac Ramsay—father I will never call you—begone from this roof, and end your few remaining days, where and how you choose; I will not harm you. Yesterday, I placed your life in the hands of the son of him whom you slew so long ago, but he, that only son, I mean young Wildman—was lost in the 'Petrel,' last night, and I can still save you. Up, I say, and begone, or your presence may make me, again, forget that I am, really, your son. Your new crime has purchased for you that safety, which, I suppose, you sought by it!"

Ramsay, bewildered, stunned, and almost expiring, under the influence of the repeated shocks which his mind and constitution had

lately received, had slipped from his seat, and was now on his knees, in an imploring attitude, on the floor of the hut.

"Don't kneel to me, old man," continued Morrison, taking him by the hands, and raising him up; "go away to your home, and there ask for mercy from one whose laws we have, both of us, so often broken."

Ramsay recovered, somewhat, at these words, and moving to the bedside of Kate, he said:—

"Kate Morrison, you see me punished, at last, for the ruin I brought upon you, in early life; your child—my own child—has avenged your long suffering. Can you, now, forgive me? Fear not; no further harm shall come to him, through me. I feel that I have but a little while yet to live, and I will confess all to them, and clear him, before I die!"

The sick woman put out her hand, which the speaker shook, and then turned towards his son.

"Will you, too, give me one pardoning shake, Dick—'bold Dick'? that is the only name I ever knew you by till to-day, and it shall be the only one I will now employ. Little as you may believe it, of such a wretch as me, I have long loved you for your bravery, while commanding the poor "Petrel," nor should I have, last night, betrayed you, ignorant as I was of our relationship, had not another and still greater devil than myself got possession of my secret, and so aroused all my fears that I was induced, by him, to remove you, in order that I might secure myself. Of young Wildman's death, however, I am innocent—he was his victim. Here, read this paper; and when you hear that I am dying, Dick—not before—when I am escaping the hangman's halter, in the gloom of approaching death, then, if necessary, bring Barrow, once more, before me. Good bye; be near at hand; you will not have long to wait!"

Saying this, and with steps far more totter-

ing and feeble even than those with which he had entered it, Isaac Ramsay quitted the cottage.

* * * *

Before concluding the present chapter, we must, again, carry the reader to Knowle-Water Barton. Frankum, more than fulfilling, in respect to time, his kind promise of the previous day, arrived there, early in the morning, bringing with him a check for a hundred pounds, which he had procured, the evening before, from Major Grimshaw, as a temporary loan to himself.

"How the devil," thought he, "I am to repay so large a sum, within the short time for which I have borrowed it, if I can tell, however, unless, indeed, I make up my mind to sell "Kurranit" to De Lisle for the forty guineas he has offered me, and pinch myself in

my living, at home, for the next few months to come. Well, and that I'll do," pursued he—"I'll give it out, that I have, lately, had a twinge or two of the gout, and so cease drinking my port and sherry and go back to my bottled ale again. I must refrain from any more trying to catch Julia's increasing fancy for me by a new coat every month; I must take out no game certificate this year, go to no taverns—lay no bets—in short, I must live d—d quietly. But never mind; Mary Wildman is a girl worth making a sacrifice for; and 'pon my honour, I would, if it were necessary, sell all that I have in the world to help her."

The widow was too unwell to leave her bedroom; and Frankum, having asked for Mary, begged to speak with her alone.

"This is, indeed, kind," began the latter; "but, I fear, you have been unable to raise the money for us."

"It must have been very hard times in the neighbourhood if I had failed to do so," re-

plied her companion; yet, as he spoke, there was something so unusually serious and troubled in his manner, that the girl felt uneasy.

"Has anything happened, Mr. Frankum?"

"I cannot deny it," he answered; "I have something to tell you of your brother. You may not see him for some time, Mary."

"Oh, speak out—tell me the worst; you cannot deceive me. I see by your face, he is injured or—dead. I am quite prepared; let me know at once!"

"Yes," said Frankum, taking her hand in his, "I fear you are but too right—there is every reason to believe that he is dead."

"Where! how!"

"Mary, you must try to controul yourself; there are circumstances connected with his death which you may contribute greatly to explain, if you can command sufficient firmness for the occasion, terrible and trying as, I know, it must be to you."

"I am ready to do whatever you may desire," replied Mary.

"Then listen to me. The "Petrel" was wrecked, on the coast, last night. Steady! remember your promise; much is depending on you. She was wrecked, last night, in consequence of a false signal, made to her from the shore—at least, that is what is believed, by those who understand the smuggling trade, and there are strong suspicions that Barrow has been concerned in it.

"Mr. Barrow! Oh, God, that man!"

"Yes, if a false signal was really made, it must have been done by that old scoundrel Isaac Ramsay; and there are rather strong proofs to show that Barrow was with him at about the time. At any rate, they are known to have been together more than once, of late. Barrow's joining Ramsay in the laugh in the orchard, the other day, has not been forgotten by those who were present. Then, did he not,

last Christmas, contradict my evidence as to what took place in "Crazy Kate's" cottage, although she has since confessed to Mr. Greville that what I said was quite true? But, besides all this, one of the smugglers, down at the village, has just told me, that he met a man, much resembling Barrow, coming from the beach, last night; in addition to which the people where he lodges declare, that he came home at a late hour, drenched to the skin with rain."

"But how can I help to explain anything more?" asked Mary, shuddering at Frankum's remarks.

"Well, without much knowing why or wherefore," replied he, "I cannot help feeling, that if he has taken part in such a crime, it is, somehow, connected with his persecutions of you, to get you to marry him."

"Edward has been no obstacle, Mr. Frankum."

"No, I confess I have no very good reasons

to give for this suspicion, but that has, often, before, been the case with me, and yet I have, generally, proved to be right, in the end."

"What, then, do you wish me to do?"

"Merely to observe him closely, when he brings you the money, by and bye, and the excuses which, I expect, you will hear from him for his rejecting the conditions which you offered him, yesterday. After the precautions which I have taken, no one will, I think, call here with the news of your brother's death, so that Barrow, when he arrives, will suppose it to be not yet known, and you must summon up courage not to undeceive him. Watch then and see how he acts."

As Frankum concluded this speech, they saw, from the window, the person they were speaking of crossing the farm-yard, towards the house.

"I will, now, leave you," said Frankum, "that he may see you alone," and he made his exit through a long passage leading to the rear

of the premises, every corner of which was quite familiar to him—Barrow soon took his place, in the parlour, with Mary.

His quick eye remarked, in a moment, that she looked deadly pale; but as he had observed no signs of deep affliction in the house, such as would, certainly, have been apparent had the fatal news of young Wildman's death been known there, he was completely misled, and ascribed the girl's mournful, depressed expression to her intense anxiety on account of her brother's position, in regard to the missing funds of the parish.

"Miss Wildman," he began, after a few introductory words, "I have been well considering your offered conditions of yesterday; but, since then, I grieve to say, I have heard news, which it appears I am destined to be sufficiently unfortunate to be the first to break to you and which, I think, will, at once, induce you to abandon any such terms. It is my melancholy

task, to tell you that your poor, unhappy brother was wrecked, last night, in the Channel."

"Well, Mr. Barrow!" said Mary, firmly compressing her blanched lips, as an additional flush of pallor (if we may be allowed the use of an expression, seemingly, so paradoxical) passed over her face, and she laid her hand upon the nearest object, for support.

"Well!" pursued her companion, unable quite to comprehend her employment of so simple a monosyllable, when he expected, instead, a burst of the wildest grief; "well, should he, now, be no longer alive, and have left the protection of his character, as a dying legacy, to you, will you, still, reject the only means at your command that can enable you to fulfil that sacred duty?"

"Go on, sir!" said the girl, struggling with a desperate bravery to hear him state the very last figure of this cruel and detestable calculation.

"Will you refuse to receive, from me, the money necessary for screening your brother's memory from disgrace, upon the one simple condition of solemnly swearing to become my wife, as soon as the days of decent mourning for him are passed?"

Mary could endure no more; her pierced, indignant heart swelled and then burst away, in its wild throbbings, from the strong cords of will with which she had so long bound it; her thick sobs chocked up her white throat, until the blue veins started forth with dreadful distinctness; her cheeks crimsoned, and she sank heavily upon the floor. Even Barrow became alarmed, and stooping down he raised her in his arms.

"Forgive me, Miss Wildman, if I have thus endeavoured to extort a promise which you have refused to yield to all my other persuasions—it is but the consequence of my baffled love; the last effort of all my hopes of happiness!"

His polluting touch, and dimly heard words, recalled her; she sprang from his arms, and attempted to reach the door, but he stepped before her: she would have called for assistance, but then her scream must reach her mother's ear, and in her present, already, weak and agitated state there was no telling what might be the consequence. She felt, too, a dizzy, confused consciousness that it would betray her lost brother's secret. Barrow's case was desperate:

"Mary Wildman," he said, in a hissing, imperfect, almost inaudible voice, "consider what you are now doing: your brother has died a thief, and, on the condition I have named, I, again, offer you the money that will avert from you all the disgrace that must rest upon you when that fact is known. I ask, for the last time, whether you will take it or not?"

"Never!" exclaimed Mary, "for I believe that you have been my brother's murderer!"

Barrow turned away from her, wrenched

open the door and quitted the room, just as Frankum, whom a servant had called, in alarm at overhearing portions of the above conversation, was on the point of entering it; and somehow it, oddly enough, happened that, although he was generally a man of quick perception, it never once occurred to him, that he would have been fully justified in barring this sudden exit, until at least five minutes after it had taken place. But the truth must be told; Frankum was rarely, if ever, a very courageous person, except when he got on horseback, and then *Cœur de Lion* himself, in his day, was hardly braver.

Let us, however, follow the steps of the fugitive, for such he, now, really was. Once again alone in the open air, he began to reflect on his dangerous position, in consequence of a wilful girl having broken, by her own, as he believed, unaided strength, through the subtle meshes of his painfully fabricated web of villany.

"There is only one thing remaining for me to do," thought he; "I must hasten to Ramsay, destroy the paper which he holds in his possession, and then start for London, without loss of time, and accept Mr. Hammond's offer of the three hundred a year. Women were my earliest bane, and my former ill luck with them attends me, still."

These thoughts had scarcely passed through his mind, when Dick Morrison tapped him on the shoulder:—

"I say, mate, I think you and I have met before to-day, haven't we? but, for all that, I expect you feel very little pleasure in our meeting again, eh?"

"You still alive!" gasped Barrow.

"Oh yes," returned Dick, eyeing him narrowly, for he knew that he had now a dangerous animal at bay; "when a man has still some important work to do on earth, he doesn't drown very easily. It is only when the great captain sees that he has no longer any real and

encessary occupation on board, that he suffers him to be paid off and go ashore from the troubles of life."

Barrow at length, for the first time in his life, perhaps, quailed at the words of a human being. He was, however, unquestionably a man of vast courage, but it was of a kind that by habit, probably, rather than nature, never prompted him to adopt physical violence, in order to attain any of his ends, while a chance remained of employing other and more powerful agencies for that purpose. It was not, therefore, of the loaded pistol, which, as we have before remarked, he always carried in his breast pocket, in case of need, that he now thought, but of his old, practised, dexterous cunning.

"What is it that you want of me?" he asked, with regained coolness. Dick Morrison drew forth the paper which Ramsay had given him.

"Do you see this?"

"Why of course I do; but tell me plainly, my friend, of what service can it be to you? How do you intend using it?"

"D—n me, now, but you look up at the gallows as coolly as a sailor looks up at the top-mast in a calm. Well, I'll tell you what I mean to do with it; the old man who was with you, in this business, has not many inches of line left upon his reel of life, and when they are run out, and he is quietly under hatches, then will come your turn to answer for the work which you have commissioned to be done for you. You and I shall not part far, again, until your account is fairly squared. Remember, although I must not show myself much yet, in this neighbourhood, I shall have my spies constantly upon you; and if you attempt to escape I shall soon follow and overtake you."

Leaving Barrow thus, under the *espionnage* of Dick Morrison, we must return, for a very brief space, to Frankum. His first proceeding,

as soon as he had seen Mary attended to, and broken the sad intelligence of her son's fate to the widow, was to go straight to Major Grimshaw, and having explained to him all his suspicions respecting the associated guilt of Ramsay and Barrow in the affair of the wreck, to beg him to issue warrants for their immediate arrest. The chief magistrate wrinkled his brow, and refused to act on such slight evidence, as he called it, observing that they had already one difficult investigation on their hands; and concluded by advising Frankum to go and speak to Fallow and hear what he thought of the matter. The recommendation was taken, but when that sagacious divine was similiarly consulted, he, somewhat rudely, insinuated that the applicant was nothing more nor less than an ignorant meddler in things boyond his sphere and capacity—the result of whose ill-applied exertions could only, if attended to at all, lead the county into useless

expense, and the authorities into unnecessary trouble.

And, so, we must leave things, for the present, while we hasten on to narrate other and equally important events, in reference to the interests of this tale.

CHAPTER V.

OLIV. Stay:
I pry'thee, tell me, what thou think'st of me.
VIO. That you do think, you are not what you are.
Twelfth Night.

WE left Monsieur De Malleville, in a former chapter, endeavouring to give a satisfactory answer to the new objection, raised by his opponents, on the score of his alleged illegitimacy, to his claims to the money bequeathed him by Monsieur Lagrange. Not content with writing a long communication, explanatory of

his early family history, to his agent at Marseilles, he, within a few hours after the dispatch of the portrait to Lawson, took his departure for the above city, and was absent about a week from Paris, neither of his nieces having even the most remote idea of the nature of the urgent business which had caused him to make so sudden a journey, except the simple fact that it was, in some way, connected with the pending law-suit. On the morning following his return home, Arthur Maitland was the first person sent for to attend on him.

"I have put you to the trouble of coming to me, monsieur, because I have two subjects of great importance upon which I wish to speak with you, without delay," began Monsieur De Malleville. "In the first place, I am sorry to say, that the consent which I, the other day, gave to your marriage with Aurélie, I must now, for a time at least, withdraw."

"Monsieur!" exclaimed the young man, his lip whitening as he spoke, "if you think

you have too hastily entrusted your niece's happiness to a stranger; if you require some better proof that I am—"

"A gentleman, I am sure, you are, and one whom I could have loved as a son. You mistake me, altogether; I speak from no doubt, whatever, regarding yourself."

"Has Aurélie then conceived any—and yet no, that cannot be, either; I saw her but yesterday, monsieur."

"*Non, non, mon ami*, you are still wrong; but circumstances of a peculiar kind are occurring to me, at present, which may place the right of deciding the fate of my niece in other hands than mine."

"If you mean that anything of a pecuniary character has happened, believe me, that will not in the least—"

"Nothing of the sort, I assure you," interposed Monsieur De Malleville, extending his hand to Arthur; "yet I fully appreciate your generosity and disinterested affection for Aurèlie,

in whose eyes such warmth and manliness of spirit cannot but highly raise you, when I inform her of what has taken place between us."

"Then, monsieur, I entreat you to explain to me your views. Surely, nothing can render it incumbent on you to withhold your sanction to our happiness!"

"I repeat," returned Monsieur De Malleville, "that, I believe, I have, now, no right either to sanction or disallow even the most trivial of my niece's actions. During my short absence from Paris, evidence relating to myself has been placed before me, which goes strongly to prove that my real name is not De Malleville, and, consequently, that I am not Aurélie's uncle. It is doubtful whether I can, any longer, even consider myself to be a Frenchman."

"Not called De Malleville! not Aurélie's uncle, nor even a Frenchman! Monsieur, your gravity of manner and incredible avowals perplex me, exceedingly."

"That is natural; but be patient, *mon ami*—you cannot be more perplexed than I am myself. However, keep my secret for the present; and, meanwhile, let me ask you to tell me something more particular of the original of the little portrait which was sent over to you by Mr. Lawson, in the belief that it was taken as a likeness of me; and, in fact, that I and some other person, supposed to have been murdered long ago, in England, are one and the same individual. I think, you said that the name by which your friend addressed me, on the Boulevards, and which you also know to have belonged to the missing farmer, was Wildman?"

Arthur's head appeared to grow giddy at these strange words, and the remarkable coincidence of likeness between the speaker and the minature, added to Lawson's mad-sounding declarations on the same subject, rushed across his doubting, confused mind.

"In the name of Heaven, Monsieur De Mal-

leville, can it be possible that you are, after all, Wildman himself?"

"Certainly I am not *the* Wildman of whom you are thinking," replied the suspected party; and then he added, with hesitation, "but it may turn out, (I say only it *may* turn out) that I, actually, myself belong to that family."

Arthur was struck dumb with astonishment, and stood looking upon Monsieur De Malleville, as he would probably have done upon one just arisen from the grave. Then, recovering himself, he said:—

"I too, now, believe that Lawson is not deceived, and why, therefore, Monsieur De Malleville, or Wildman, (which am I to call you?) will you, any longer, attempt to conceal yourself? If you have reasons for the desertion of your family—of which, however, I dread to think—why have you more than half revealed, to me, your horrible secret? You know not, Monsieur, how deeply I am, personally, interested in that family, or you would

not have done so, I feel convinced. For God's sake, then, tell me all, and show me that I may honorably keep silence on the subject, or recal, at once, the words which you have, but this instant, spoken, lest I, who have learned, for Aurélie's sake as well as your own, to regard you as a second father, should be the one to betray you."

"Young man," answered Monsieur De Malleville, catching somewhat of the former's excitement of manner, "I have not a single word to recal, nor have you anything to keep secret for me, longer than the few days which I ask for pushing further my inquiries. I am no base deserter of a family—no impostor—no deceiver of you, *mon pauvre ami;* yet I have, already, discovered quite enough to satisfy me, that there are many singular and mysterious circumstances, in connection with my own history, for me to endeavour to clear up, without loss of time; and for that purpose I require your aid. Attend, then, carefully, I beg of

you, to the following facts, as they have been laid before me, in a very convincing manner, at Marseilles."

But we shall not follow the precise conversation which ensued, as we can, in less space, and perhaps quite as effectually, give its substance in the more condensed form of narrative.

It appeared, that, on reaching Marseilles Monsienr De Malleville had met the old priest from Lyons, who had received the confession and the written statement of Madame Marie de Malleville, a short time before her decease, as mentioned in a preceding page of this volume. The document began by roundly asserting, that François De Malleville was not her son, nor in any way related to her—a declaration which the priest said he was quite ready to make oath that she again repeated to him, orally, in her dying moments, and after the administration to her of extreme unction. Her words were, therefore, surrounded by so much solemnity of circumstance that their truth

seemed placed beyond all possible question, whatever; and, that being the case, the remainder of her tale appeared equally worthy of absolute credit. It went to this extent:—

Soon after her marriage to her late husband, against the consent of his parents, who resided in Normandy, and were of a rank considerably higher than that of her own friends, they went first to Paris, where, in the gaieties of the capital, they exhausted pretty nearly all their small pecuniary resources, and then, for cheapness, migrated to the south of France. There, while expiating, in approaching penury, the wilfulness of their matrimonial indiscretion, the wife gave birth to a still-born child. That event was succeeded by alarming illness on the part of the mother; and Monsieur De Malleville sought for her the charitable assistance, and spiritual offices, of their church, both of which were freely rendered by the benevolent inmates of a neighbouring religious house.

But, although death was averted, the reco-

very, to health, of the invalid was slow and tedious; want was still hovering about the onward path of the young pair, and all the efforts of the poor husband, to obtain some steady employment, were made in vain.

At last, after many anxious weeks of suffering despondency, one of the priests came to them with a proposal from his superior, the nature of which was, that if they would consent to adopt, as their own, a male infant, undertaking to rear him up with care and tenderness, they should receive a certain stipulated sum, annually, until the boy attained the age of twenty-one years. The offered remuneration was handsome; it gave Monsieur De Malleville a chance of extricating himself from his pressing difficulties; the arrangement was certain to be kept as a profound secret; and, finally, the bargain was struck, to the complete satisfaction of all the contracting parties, the putative father and mother removing, at once, with their charge, to the greater privacy of a comfortable home in

the city of Marseilles. The child was christened François, and means were provided for affording him a good education, as soon as he was old enough to go to school. In time, he became a flourishing merchant; and never did a son repay, with more love and respect than he, the moderate share of care and kindness which he experienced beneath the protecting roof of his adopted parents.

The reader has been told that there was a second son who, thanks to the money brought into the family on account of his supposed brother, and which allowed Monsieur De Malleville to wait patiently for the tardy forgiveness of his own family, was likewise well educated. He married, early, a woman of accomplishments and beauty but little if any fortune, died between thirty and forty, his widow took another husband, and the children, Louise and Aurélie, had the rare happiness of meeting with the most indulgent of life-long protectors in their bachelor uncle François.

But let us proceed with our story. Having carefully perused the written statement from which we have abridged the above portion of our narrative, Monsieur De Malleville's next step was to go, at once, accompanied by the old priest, who fortunately belonged to the fraternity, to the religious establishment named in the document referred to. At first, strong objections were thrown in the way of the prosecution of his enquiries, but having proved that the matter was one which the law would soon have, officially, to examine, and, by advice of the Lyon's brother, having made a present of money to the House, he was, forthwith, permitted to look over the private records belonging to the particular period of his own infancy; and thence he was not long in extracting the most convincing verification of the facts which we have just related. From various memoranda, and the clearest cash entries, made at the identical time, it appeared sufficiently evident, that he must have been the illegitimate offspring of

wealthy English parents, whose chief agent in thus concealing all traces, probably, of his dishonouring existence, had been a person of the name of Barrow. At least, it was from him that all the remittances for the maintenance and education of the child had regularly reached the hands of the deceased superior, during the long course of from eighteen to twenty years: a circumstance, moreover, admitting not of any manner of doubt, inasmuch as several autograph letters, so signed, were still extant in the archives of the establishment, the most important and explanatory of which was, for a second considerable donation, placed in the possession of the inquirer.

Such, then, recounted as briefly as we have been enabled to do it, was the result of Monsieur De Malleville's investigations respecting himself.

"And, now," said he, again addressing Arthur, at the close of his more minute explanation, "I am most anxious to communicate with

your friend, Mr. Lawson, as early as possible, as I cannot help thinking, that, by means of the little portrait which he sent you, the other day, I may yet succeed in following out my strange history to some kind of satisfactory conclusion."

"Did you say the agent was called Barrow, monsieur?" asked his companion, knitting his brows as if in deep thought. "How singular! the only enemy I have ever known in life bore that detested name; but he is comparatively a young man, and cannot, therefore, be the same person."

Monsieur De Malleville, however, paid little or no attention to the remark, merely inquiring, in continuation of their conversation, if Arthur could furnish him with Lawson's address.

"I have received a letter from him, this morning, informing me of his intended arrival in Paris, within a very few hours," was the reply. "Your portrait, which we recently forwarded to England, has convinced every

one, to whom it has been shown, that you are the person who was lost; and Mr. Lawson is coming here to see if he can induce you to accompany him back, in order to satisfy the minds of the authorities, whose duty it is legally to examine the question that has been so oddly raised in connection with yourself. He is bringing with him the affidavits of many of the most respectable and influential men in his neighbourhood; and so strong is the feeling, there, of your being really Wildman, that in case you should refuse to undertake the journey, the English Ambassador, at this court, is to be applied to, that he may add his more powerful persuasions to obtain your consent to the proceeding."

"That, as you may imagine," replied Monsieur De Malleville, "will not now be needed; Mr. Lawson will find in me a very willing follower. In the meantime, perhaps, you will be good enough to explain to him, on his arrival, all that I have just told you. It will save

time and a very ludicrous scene, when he and I meet. Remember, however, that, before I have fully gone to the bottom of this matter, I do not wish any one in this house to be informed of it. Louise and Aurélie must not know why I am going to England, further than, that it is on business of the greatest importance. *Au revoir, mon ami!* This is a most curious affair, throughout."

Arthur returned to his hotel in no state of mind fit for pursuing his studies, at the Atelier, that day. Late in the evening, Lawson arrived in Paris, and going immediately to seek out the former, they were soon busily occupied in discussing, together, the very points which we have here brought under the notice of our readers.

The old, sweet-toned clock of the Sorbonne had just struck two, and the vibratory echoes were still lingering about the dome, as, beautifully silvered by the clear moon, it rose high above the tops of the grey, surrounding build-

ings, into the deep blue sky of night, when Lawson, (having finished the last glass of *vin ordinaire*, and pronounced it poor, thin, wretched stuff to sit over for so many hours) sprang up from his chair, exclaiming:—

"Now let us to bed, my boy; I shall escape the charge of insanity, after all, for, in hunting out one secret, you see that I have stumbled, thus accidentally, upon another almost as important; and if your jolly old friend, Monsieur De Malleville, is not, really, poor Alick Wildman, as I have represented him, I am, at least, very sure, both from the astonishing likeness and from what you have now told me, that he is his elder brother, Philip, who disappeared in infancy."

"All this," observed Arthur, "is so remarkable, that I feel more than half inclined to take a trip over to England with you, to see how it terminates."

But little did he think, as he uttered the words, that a summons was, at that very mo-

ment, on its way to Paris, that would, actually, bring them to pass. So it was, however; by the next post he had a letter, acquainting him with the alarming illness of his father, in consequence of a sudden attack of paralysis. In the course of the day, Lawson and Monsieur De Malleville met; and passports for all three having been procured, they started for England, on the following afternoon, by the earliest diligence.

CHAPTER VI.

ALM.—Given me again from death! O, all ye powers
Confirm this miracle! Can I believe
My sight, against my sight? and shall I trust
That sense, which in one instant shows him dead—
And living?

CONGREVE'S "*Mourning Bride.*"

As soon as our travellers reached London, the first thing which Lawson did was to write a letter to Mr. Greville, informing him of their arrival there, and explaining to him the new discovery in regard to Monsieur De Malleville; adding,

in conclusion, that they should re-commence their journey into Devonshire by the mail, on the morrow, and begging him, therefore, to see Mrs. Wildman, immediately, for the purpose of guarding her from the dangerous effects that might, otherwise, be produced on her by suddenly meeting, in the stranger, whose arrival was now near at hand, a person so wonderfully resembling her own lost husband.

Now it happened, very fortunately for the the uninterrupted progress of our tale, that the post, which conveyed to Mr. Greville this startling communication, also brought him another, not less surprising. It was as follows:

"Sir,

"I take the liberty of addressing myself to you, that I may obtain your assistance in a matter of great delicacy and importance; feeling fully assured that your official character, as a clergyman of our church, gives me the best guarantee which I could have for

your making use of the following communication with all fidelity and discretion. From the information which I possess, it appears that there is now residing, or at least did reside, at no very distant period, either in your parish or its immediate vicinity, a family of the name of Wildman, who, many years since, lost the inheritance of a considerable property, owing to the supposed death of an infant member, bearing the Christian name of Philip. That child, as from a recent discovery I have every reason to believe, did not really die, although the circumstances attending his disappearance led, at the time, to such a conclusion, but, on the contrary, he was fraudulently removed to a foreign country, in order that the estates, to which he should have succeeded, might pass into other hands; and I deeply regret to say, that my husband, owing to the baseness of his father, is, at present, in the unlawful possession of them. My object, in thus revealing to you a secret of so much importance, is to discover if, through

your benevolent mediation, an immediate restitution of this property cannot be effected, without leading to such a public exposure of the case as would cast lasting dishonour on the memory of one long ago gone to his account, and whose misdeeds, therefore, it would cause his family infinite pain to see, at this remote date, dragged forward into the full light of disgrace and ignominy. Trusting to you to open this negotiation with the family, and hoping that my design may succeed in your hands, but, at all events, determined, in myself, that the most ample justice shall be rendered to them, whatever may be the humiliation to ourselves,

"I remain, Sir,

"Yours very obliged,

"CAROLINE HAMMOND.

"*Park-street, Grosvenor-square.*

"P.S. I may add, that I shall hold myself in readiness for an immediate interview with

the family on this subject; for which purpose, and especially as all the proofs are here, they will, no doubt, think it worth their while to visit London, without delay. I have, above, entered into no details, but I cannot help at once observing, for the consolation of these deeply injured people, that I think it not improbable their relative may yet be restored to them, as well as the property, inasmuch as I shall, I hope, be able to satisfy them, that he was placed under the protection of a religious brotherhood, somewhere in the south of France, and, further, that he is known to have been alive at the age of twenty-one, since which period, as the money for his support then ceased to be transmitted to his foreign protectors, my informers have heard nothing respecting him."

We need only observe, in explanation of this letter, that it resulted from inquiries set on foot by the writer, in consequence of the un-

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dence!" ejaculated the old pastor, as he laid down the strange communication, upon the table in his study, and took off his silver spectacles. "Here, then, are two heralds, at once, come to tell of the return of the lost heir! Everything agrees respecting him—the portrait sent home, his own account of himself to Lawson, and this letter from Mrs. Hammond. But until his actual arrival, at Knowle-water, I will say nothing regarding the property to the family, and merely use the letter as an additional confirmation to the widow, that the expected stranger is really her late husband's brother, Philip Wildman."

* * * * * *

We again return to London. In the letter received by Arthur Maitland, in Paris, informing him of his father's dangerous attack, it was arranged that, as he must stay a night in the capital, on reaching England, he should

take a bed at the inn whence the western mail coach would start, on the day following; and that while there, he should have a second account of the state of the invalid, which would, in all probability, either prepare him for the worst of the case, or give him some more cheering hopes, to relieve the anxiety of the remainder of his long journey. To this arrangement, both Monsieur De Malleville and Lawson, of course, gladly consented; and, accordingly, the three friends slept at the appointed house, in the city. In the morning, when they came down to the breakfast table, the expected bulletin, from Devonshire, was put into Arthur's hands by the waiter.

"Well, Arthur," enquired Lawson, when the letter had been hastily glanced over, "what news?"

"Thank God," replied the former, "all immediate danger is past. My father has lost the use of his right side, almost entirely, but the doctor assures me, that he does not ap-

prehend any thing like death, for the present."

"Then now," said Lawson, "as your trouble is happily lessened, we shall set off in better heart and spirits; and I want you to assist me in persuading our friend, here, to adopt a plan which I was proposing to him, while we were dressing just now. In the first place, I am naturally anxious, for my own justification, in so obstinately maintaining that I had discovered poor Alick Wildman, in the person of Monsieur De Malleville, that those, at home, shall have every reason for sympathizing with me, in the error into which I have been led; and I am convinced that, if Monsieur will but remove his moustache, and obligingly assume, for a time, an English dress, there is not a person in Devonshire, who remembers Wildman, but will be as much deceived by his appearance as I have been myself. But I have another reason for arging this, and I think you will agree with me, that it is one fully justified by the

circumstances:—I wish to try the effect of taking Monsieur De Malleville, so prepared, into the presence of old Ramsay; and whatever may be the result of the experiment, I am willing to hold myself fully responsible for it. I have been jeered enough, of late, and do not, therefore, mind encountering a little more ridicule, should my plans of discovering the old fellow's supposed crime come to nothing."

The proposal was certainly curious, but, nevertheless, Arthur supported it.

"Be it so, then, *mes amis*," replied Monsieur De Malleville; "I will not further resist you. The moustache is easily to be got rid of; but where, in so short a time, will you find me the clothes?"

"Leave all that to me," returned Lawson; "London is a convenient place for schemers of all kinds."

They, forthwith, sallied out in quest of a ready made clothes store, and soon discovering the desired "emporium", (to use the pleasant and

peculiar language of Messrs. Moses & Co. of the present day) Monsieur De Malleville was, as by the effect of Harlequin's wand, rapidly metamorphosed into the novel appearance of an English agriculturalist of the better class.

"There!" exclaimed Lawson, when the change was completed, "if that figure do not, at once, clear me from the imputation of being a dreaming, deluded humbug, and tear a confession of guilt from the bosom of old Ramsay there are no snakes in Virginia, that's all!"

On the same evening, the travellers again set out on their journey, by mail, reaching the little post town, where the coach finally halted, late in the following day. Here they separated, Arthur proceeding alone to his father's house, by a conveyance which was waiting for him, and Monsieur De Malleville and Lawson going on at once, in a chaise, to Knowle-water Barton. As soon as the vehicle drew up in front of the farm, the latter alighted and entered the house, that he might learn if the widow had been duly

prepared for the meeting then to take place. He found, as he expected, Mr. Greville already there; but still he thought it necessary again to impress upon Mrs. Wildman the nature of the startling surprise which she would certainly experience on seeing the person by whom he was now accompanied.

"Never fear, Mr. Lawson," she replied, "I can bear it; let him come in. The man has never breathed whom, face to face, I could mistake for poor Alick!"

And the next minute Monsieur De Malleville was before her.

As he came forward, and took off his hat to speak, Mrs. Wildman grew deadly pale, and staggered back towards Mr. Greville; and the latter catching her in his arms, to prevent her from falling, while he fixed a wild and bewildered gaze upon the new comer, exclaimed:

"Good heavens, it is Alick Wildman after all! Mr. Lawson, I trust this is no mistaken

kindness on your part, and that you have not chosen such an ill-judged method for breaking to us a most frightful secret? Poor thing, she may well swoon since even I cannot believe my own eyes. Surely, never was a brother so like as this before!" Then addressing Monsieur De Malleville, he continued, ere there was time for explanation:—"Speak to her, sir, speak, I beseech you; your voice may remove a horrible illusion. Come nearer; let her, let us, hear you speak—your presence seems hardly natural!"

"For God's sake, sir," broke in Lawson, "leave Mrs. Wildman to me. Have I not warned you of all this? your words, instead of calming her, will kill her outright, if you go on so! Mr. Greville—Mrs. Wildman, this is foolish; there is no deception. De Malleville speak to them—tell them who you really are."

The severity of this reproof somewhat brought the good old pastor to his momentarily lost senses, and he, too, joined in endeavouring

to re-assure the terror-stricken, but now reviving widow.

Mary here entered the room, and ran to the assistance of her mother, whose eyes were again rivetted to the features of the stranger.

"Monsieur De Malleville, or, I should rather now say, Philip Wildman," repeated Lawson, "your continued silence is dangerous; why do you not, at once, explain yourself to them? You see the effect your presence has produced. Speak man, speak out, plainly, or, depend upon it you will turn the brains of all around you!"

But the order to speak under such perplexing circumstances, was not easily to be obeyed, especially by a foreigner not over proficient or fluent in the English tongue; and instead, therefore, of explaining distinctly who he considered himself to be, Monsieur De Malleville could only summon to his aid a most confusing string of French exclamatory interjections, and, probably, a few of his native, milder maledictions.

At length, however, he found more comprehensible expressions, and advancing to the side of the widow he said, in the most soothing accents:

"Madame, let me beg of you to be composed; my appearance (and, after all that has recently taken place, I am not surprised at it) has greatly misled you. We are, believe me, perfect strangers to each other; yet, there is every moment increasing reason to suppose, that your lost husband was, really, my brother. I have, of course, no remembrance whatever of him, but I have no longer any doubt, in my own mind, that the fact will turn out as I have stated it. Be then, for the present, consoled; and, when you have recovered yourself sufficiently, I will explain more to you. My history is a strange one."

At these words, Mrs. Wildman seized the two hands of Monsieur De Malleville, and looking up in his face, while the tears trickled rapidly down her cheeks, she said to him:

"Oh, sir, I suppose you are telling me the truth; but yet you are so exactly, so strangely, dreadfully like my own poor Alick that I can scarcely believe you are not really he."

As she spoke, thus, the most violent hysterical sobs choked her further utterance, and she seemed fast relapsing into her former state. Mary perceived that for a while, at least, the interview had better be suspended, and communicated her thoughts to Monsieur De Malleville in very respectable French. Even at such a moment of pre-occupation, he expressed his pleasure at being so addressed, in his own language, by the pretty English girl, whom he, at once, concluded to be his newly discovered niece; and rising from his seat at her bidding he retired, with Lawson, to another part of the house.

In one of the long passages of the rambling old building, they met Frankum, who was just in the act of ridiculing the importunate assurances of half-a-dozen peasants and servants,

that their long lost master had positively returned home, at last.

"All right, all right!" his voice was to be heard saying; "where is he then? let me have a sight of this French ghost, with whom poor Lawson has scraped up such an acquaintance. What a precious pack of asses you must all be to be so deceived! Holloa! here they come. Well, Lawson, where is your wonderful friend?"

"Step into this room, where there is yet some light remaining, and I will introduce you to him," was the reply.

Frankum knowingly winked his eye at the persons present, as much as to say, "now you shall see how quickly I will defeat this hoax," and then entered the apartment. Monsieur de Malleville understood, at a glance, the kind of person they had to deal with, and being, besides, desirous not to thwart the intended amusement of his friend Lawson, he readily acquiesced in it:—

"Why, sir, how you stare at me," he said;

"one would think you had never seen me before, in your life." The remark was pronounced in exceedingly plain English, and as the words fell upon his ear, both the eyes and mouth of Frankum sensibly expanded.

The stranger held out his hand; Frankum moved a pace backwards.

"Well now, that is what I call devilishly uncivil," remarked Lawson; "have you no greeting for an old friend? Ah, I thought your incredulity would give way as soon as you saw him."

"Don't joke, 'pon my honor I feel my blood freezing within me at the sight. Tell me, what does it mean; how have you managed it?"

"Joke, my boy! it is you who are joking, to ask me how I have managed it. You see Wildman, I assure you, now before you—speak to him and ask him if it is not so."

"Wildman! Mr. Alick Wildman!" exclaimed Frankum, in tones of respectful alarm.

"That is not how I was formerly addressed," replied Monsieur de Malleville, "yet, nevertheless, I am Wildman himself, returned from France."

"Good Lord! you do not really mean it? But his—that is, the bones which were found the other day?"

"He has done very well without them all this time," observed Lawson, scarcely able to preserve a steady countenance.

De Malleville smiled, and thinking that the scene had been carried quite far enough, was preparing to end the deception:—

"Come, sir," said he, "let us shake hands."

Frankum, with some hesitation, extended his palm, without apologizing for not removing his glove, as he fully expected to be grasped by a hand supernaturally cold and marrowless; and when the door opened and Mr. Greville entered, he found Frankum, momentarily, as much petrified by the touch of the stranger as Don Giovanni

is represented, on the stage, to have been by the marble fingers of the celebrated statue. The old Pastor, who had by this had ample time to recover from his own first consternation at the presence of De Malleville, at once perceived the nature of the situation; and, with his wonted simplicity and goodness of heart, he, to some extent, helped to complete it.

"Be not alarmed, my good friend," he said, laying his hand on Frankum's shoulder, "I will stand by you with all the abjurations and powers of the church—but this, however, is no ghostly visitor after all, at least if he is, he has long been a sojourner on earth, and our fellow mortals are making very important communications to me respecting him."

"Do you, then, understand, the meaning of all this, sir?" asked Frankum, with a ludicrous expression of utter confusion upon his face—a look so comically absurd in the mixture of feelings which it indicated, that both Lawson and De Malleville could no longer refrain from

laughing, and the former gave vent to the suppressed heaving of his stout sides in a peal of the heartiest merriment.

But seriousness was soon restored, among the party, on Mr. Greville reading the letter he had received from Mrs. Hammond; and the joy which it diffused may be easily imagined by the reader.

"As to the recovery of the property," said Monsieur De Malleville, "I am comparatively indifferent about it, but the confession fills me with delight, inasmuch as it fully explains all which I have come to England to inquire into."

"Yes!" replied Lawson, "but your relatives here are, at present, placed in great pecuniary difficulties, from which, I trust, this money will serve to set them free."

"So be it, then; no exertion shall be spared to help them; and whatever is thus regained shall be entirely theirs. It will terminate the labours and anxieties of my sister-in-law, and

make my pretty niece a very desirable wife for the best gentleman among you."

"So it will, so it will, 'pon my honour!" exclaimed Frankum, "and that pleases me above everything else that has occurred; for if there be not yet another mystery to be cleared up, Arthur Maitland has served her badly, and he may now have reason to repent it."

"Indeed!" remarked De Malleville, "I am sorry to find that. Pray explain to me his conduct; for notwithstanding all that I now know regarding my real family, I would not, for a great deal, hear anything bad of him, since he is engaged to marry one, in France, whom I shall not cease still to consider as my own niece."

"I can myself explain nothing to you, and, perhaps, I ought to have said nothing, therefore," replied Frankum; "but I spoke on the impulse of the moment. However, as the young man is now at home, I think he should be made to answer for his behaviour. But you

must yourself inquire of Mary all about it. It has well nigh broken her heart, that I am sure, poor thing! and might have injured her reputation, had we not all of us, residing here, known her to be the very best girl living; and I expect that having, at last, found so proper a natural protector as yourself, she will feel the greatest impatience to see her character vindicated and her honour cleared. By heavens, and she shall have my assistance, too, if it can be of any avail to her, that you may depend on!"

"I marvel much that I have heard nothing of all this," observed Mr. Greville.

"No, I am proud to say that I have been, I believe, her only confidant and adviser in the matter," observed Frankum.

"And I am sure, that she has had in you a kind and true one, at any rate," said the old vicar.

"And, *mon ami*," added De Malleville, approaching and again extending his hand to

Frankum, "as we are of one blood, my own heart tells me that my little niece will not easily forget your kindness!"

"As to that," answered the latter, "I shall be glad enough that she should cease to remember, any longer, the little that I have been able to do for her, in the way of counsel and sympathy, if we can only give her reason to forget the circumstances that have, of late, so greatly grieved her."

The doubts in the mind of De Malleville' respecting himself, being thus decidedly and unexpectedly set at rest by the new evidence, both as to his identity and claims, afforded by Mrs. Hammond's letter, he was now enabled to turn all his thoughts, and the full current of his naturally strong feelings, to the most anxious investigation of the circumstances and condition of his newly discovered relatives. Brought from a foreign country, in pursuance of an object purely selfish, he suddenly found the little

thread of his own personal history brought to an abrupt termination, in its isolated form, and about to plunge, as an essential part thereof, into the entangled web of the fortunes of a set of people of whose very existence the merest accident in the world had apprised him, not many weeks previously. The fate of his niece, Mary, in particular claimed all his interest and sympathy; and it was with the deepest pain and perplexity, that he heard of her long attachment to, and subsequent ill-treatment by one for whom he had, already, conceived almost a fatherly regard, and to whose union with his adopted niece, Aurélie De Malleville, he had, for some time, looked forward with parental satisfaction and delight.

In the course of the evening, when the first excitement produced by these novel events had somewhat subsided, Monsieur De Malleville (we shall still call him by the name under which the reader has so long known him) took Mary

aside, in order to learn, from her own lips, the exact nature of the alleged ill-conduct shown towards her by Arthur Maitland.

"My child," said he, taking his niece's arm within his, and walking up and down the old parlour with her, "there can be now no doubt, I think, of the real nature of the relationship in which we stand to each other, and therefore must request you to confide to me as your uncle—your own poor father's brother—candidly and truly, all that has passed between young Maitland and yourself. Regard me not as any longer a stranger—I have a double claim upon your fullest confidence, since you are proved to be of my own blood, and this young man stands pledged, by every tie of honour, to one in France, whom I must still look upon as standing in the same relation to me."

His companion withdrew her arm, and looked up in the speaker's face, with a look of such intense agony of meaning in it, that, although

for a moment the colour fled from her cheeks, as if the announcement had transformed her into a figure of marble, yet the brief reflection of the next brought back the ebbing life blood, and suffused her whole countenance with a blush of the deepest crimson:—

"Is he, then, really engaged, and to one in France, do you say?"

"Poor, poor girl! I grieve to say he is. And my own poor Aurélie, too—this news will povre a dagger to her heart also. But *ma fille,* my niece, let me bid you be comforted!—Alas, how your fond bosom heaves, *mon enfant!* Of this, however, be assured, if he has wronged you, in Aurélie De Malleville you will have a noble avenger. Her hand he shall never have. Yet, stay," he added, "let us not act rashly—I will not condemn him, without the strongest proofs—I remember his telling me, in France, that he, himself, had been the injured party. Some error, or some enemy, may be at the bottom of all this. I have known hearts

broken, and lives lost, before to-day, in these love matters, when all might have been prevented by timely examination and care."

"It signifies little to me, now uncle, what has led to my unhappiness—my misery—since your words have destroyed my last hope—that hope to which, against wrong and suffering, I have despairingly clung until now. Still, for his own sake, and that of your niece, would to heaven, it were possible for you to prove him innocent!"

She hastily left the room, uttering an apology for a momentary absence, and presently returned, with an open letter in her hand.

"I hold here," she said, in quick and excited accents, "a letter, which not even my own mother has yet seen; and after what I have just heard from you, dear uncle, I am doubtful if I should do wisely or honourably in submitting it to your inspection."

She hesitated, holding the paper with a trembling hand as she stood considering.

At one moment, she appeared on the point of tearing into a hundred pieces, the sad witness of her former lover's supposed treachery, and the wretched spring of all her own sorrow; but then, yielding to De Malleville's earnest look and words of entreaty, that she would forbear committing an act so rash, she added:—

"Yes, you shall read it. It contains that, which, had I had a fother living at the time I received it, I would have asked him to clear me from, and to you, therefore, I will now look, as to one entitled and able to afford me the same succour."

The uncle took the letter from the hands of his niece, and as his eye glanced over the infamous forgery, his usually clear end benevolent countenance assumed a darker and a darker expression, of contempt and anger.

"The viper! *ma pauvere petite!*"

He drew Mary to his bosom; kissed her white and beautiful brow again and again, and

then, folding up the paper, placed it carefully in his pocket.

"Go Mary, go my child to your bed now, and when you kneel in prayer to-night, thank a merciful God, for at last sending you a proper protector. I will see Arthur Maitland in the morning."

Accordingly, early on the following day, De Malleville duly made his appearance, at the house of Arthur. He was shown into the library, and joined there by the young man, a few minutes afterwards.

"Ah, *mon cher Monsieur!*" began the latter, advancing into room, and extending his hand. The other moved a step backward, and drew himself up to the full height of his tall figure.

"Not so fast, monsieur."

Arthur also moved backwards, but it was with a look of deep and bewildered astonishment.

"Monsieur De Malleville!" he repeated,

"what must I understand by this unexplained manner to me?"

"I will tell you! Here, look at this writing, and tell me whether it is your own or not."

Arthur looked for an instant at the superscription, and then replied—

"It is certainly my writing, yet I know not when or wherefore I could have sent such a letter to Miss Wildman."

"Now read the contents, and tell me what you think of yourself, and what, above, all I am to think of you. Remember all that you have been doing beneath my roof, in France, and then give me your answer!"

With his brain reeling and whirling, as if he had been tumbling headlong from a precipice in some horrid dream, Arthur read the dreadful words, under his eye, in what appeared to be, most undeniably, his own peculiar style of handwriting.

"But can you, Monsieur De Malleville,"

he exclaimed, in a loud and passionate voice, having finished the perusal of the epistle, "can you, who know me now so well, believe that this monstrous letter has proceeded from me?"

"Hush, sir," was the peremptory reply, though uttered in a lower tone; "your father, I believe, lies dangerously il in this house—for his sake, therefore, I will not here listen to what you may have to say; but if that paper admits of contradiction or denial, you will meet my niece and me, face to face, this afternoon, at Knowle-water."

Arthur with difficulty controlled himself to answer:—

"Be it so then, sir; my father is, thank God, no longer in any immediate danger.—I will not fail to appear at the farm, that I may rebut this most atrocious accusation against me."

The door closed after De Malleville, and the speaker again sought his father's library, where

he flung himself upon a chair to collect, if possible, his scattered senses sufficiently to make out the necessary proofs in vindication of his own attainted honour. And for a full hour did he labour manfully at his painful task, yet at the end of that time, he rose from his seat with this bare and unsupported assertion still upon his lips—

"I am innocent of the baseness alleged—I never wrote such a letter, and that God knows."

Alas! how many guiltless, accused beings have been enabled to bring forward no stronger testimony in their defence, especially in disproof of the foul tales of slanderous tongues, than the simple reiteration of this strong consciousness of their entire innocence.

The hour of afternoon, which had seemed to Arthur, in his impatience, so slow in arriving, came at last, and he set out on his way to Knowle-water. During his hasty walk thither, he recalled to mind the fact of De Malleville having spoken of Mary Wildman, in their

recent interview, as his niece; but although the circumstance would, at any other time, have awakened his liveliest curiosity to know how the important question of his foreign friend's identity had been finally solved, he now looked upon it as one of the most utter and complete indifference to himself, as compared to the more important concern which he naturally felt regarding the cowardly letter, with the infamous authorship of which he stood so cruelly charged.

Proud in the feeling of his own integrity, despite the distress and agony to which he had, nevertheless, been thus made a prey, the young man, with an erect brow and a firm step, entered the familiar portal of the old farm. The widow herself was the first person by whom he was met.

"Mrs. Wildman," he exclaimed, "don't turn away from me; I am not ashamed to appear before you, however deeply I may grieve that my return here, after so long an

absence, should be coupled with the horrible suspicions that are, at present, entertained against me. God knows how much I have loved you all, and how innocent I am of anything that has been dishonourable or false towards your daughter."

"Well, sir," replied the mother, "Heaven grant you may make it appear so! I have known you from your infancy, and have always felt for you the greatest respect and regard. There is my hand still, Mr. Arthur; you do not look like one that is guilty. You are the son of a man that was never in his life found to do a mean or unworthy act; come in, sir, for his sake come in, and welcome—I will not condemn you; but there is one here, now, fitter than myself—whose heart is almost broken—one, I say, that is fitter than I to hear your defence." And the speaker, at once, led the way into the parlour.

There, were assembled De Malleville, Mary, and Frankum. The first of these was engaged

in writing, at the moment, but laid down his pen as Arthur entered; the last named rose from his chair, and passing the fingers of one hand quickly through his stiff, iron grey hair, while with the other he pulled up his precise collar, and adjusted, somewhat nervously, his cravat, as the colour mounted, in a deeper glow, to the very temples of a contenance never, by any means, deficient of the most healthful complexion, he strode to the fireplace, before which he stood with legs considerably asunder, in that peculiar and characteristic attitude which, at once, betokens an Englishman's greatest happiness and independence.

But how shall we describe Mary Wildman? With a convulsive, desperate effort to overcome the death-like faintness which shot through every limb, she, too, arose as she recognized, even before the door opened, the well-known footsteps of the one she had loved—perhaps did still love—best on earth. When she first looked towards her youthful lover, there was a glance of

indignant pride in her eye, and a rigid, controlled fixedness in all her other features which added to the general expression of grief and anxiety but too plainly engraven on every lineament, made her appear to Arthur at least five, instead of barely a year older than when they had last parted. She had sprung forward at a bound, as it were, from the dawning loveliness of a mere girl into the riper and more touching beauty of an exquisite woman. Nature's delicate tints and graceful pencillings at the age of "sweet sixteen" were now glowing colours, fully revealed, and charms of modelled symmetry. The fair bud had passed into the sweet flower. Promise had ended in fulfilment. Very plain and simple in her attire, as became the life she was now leading, and divested of every artificial ornament, Mary had nothing about her of that glittering and occasionally almost fanciful loveliness that so dazzled and bewitched in her rival, Aurélie de Malleville. Aurélie was fitted to be the idol of a brilliant city; Mary's was a

beauty that harmonized better with the sunshine of quiet nature. And yet, in attempting to strike a correct balance between their respective claims to admiration, it is perhaps fair to say of the latter, that, as far as beauty alone went she might possibly have shone in Aurélie's sphere without sustaining much loss of attractiveness, while, certainly, the French girl, taken out of that sphere, would have suffered like the poor, shining glow-worm removed into the daylight.

As Mary raised her head, her glance was met by the fixed and searching, steady gaze of Arthur—a gaze so full of tenderness, triumphing over every other feeling, that, in a moment, it shook all her fortitude, and read to her, though to the last syllable of it, his yet unheard defence.

"Mary," said De Malleville, who observed her agitation, "take courage, my child—remember that you have now a protector to whom you may look for aid and support. Come to

this seat, by my side. Now, Monsieur, I again ask you what you have to say in explanation of the conduct which you have pursued towards my niece?"

"Miss Wildman," said Arthur, in the firmest tone of which he could command, at the instant, and paying no attention to the question that was put him, "before I can know in what manner to defend myself, I have one thing to ask of you—do you believe me capable of having written you the letter that was shown me this morning? Speak plainly—do you think it has proceeded from me!"

"She shall not answer you, monsieur. She does, however, believe it—there is your own acknowledged hand-writing to prove it."

"I still await your reply, Miss Wildman."

The eyes of the speaker remained fixed upon the girl's countenance, and in them dwelt the same unflinching expression of truth and rectitude. In her inmost soul, Mary now believed him innocent, even in opposition to the strong

evidence of her own senses. Her lips quivered and her heart throbbed violently, and with hesitation she inquired:—

"From whom else could it have come? I wish—indeed, I wish to think you—"

"Arthur Maitland," interposed Frankum, "this is scarcely fair, 'pon my honour it is not. You will hardly mend matters by the course you are at present taking; you had better, it strikes me, plead guilty, at once, and trust to the mercy of your jury."

"Sir," returned the young man fiercely, "I know how much of that I have to expect from you, after the insulting letter with which you favored me, a few weeks since. But of that by-and-bye."

"I wrote you a letter a few weeks since!" replied Frankum, "I deny it—I have only written once to you, and that was soon after your arrival in Paris."

"And to that letter," observed Arthur, "which I thought, at the time, a very kind and

generous one, I replied as you wished me to do. I accepted your proffered mediation between Miss Wildman and myself, and I, also, enclosed you one for her, asking her to forgive my hasty temper and forget what had passed ere I left home. Where are those letters?"

"Why, man, you are mad!" retorted Frankum. "Do you find in that rascally letter, to Mary, a single word about asking her forgiveness? or will you call this one, addressed to myself, a suitable answer to my intended kindness? D—n it, my poor fellow, you must be raving, stark—"

Mary had, during the last portion of this altercation, half swooned in the arms of her uncle; and the latter, disgusted at what appeared to him the young man's blind, gross baseness, was endeavouring to lead her from the room.

"Stay, stay, Monsieur de Malleville!" exclaimed the accused, barring the way to the door—"for God's sake remove her not; she must remain to hear what I have further to say.

Miss Wildman—Mary—dear Mary, arouse yourself—these letters, as you will see, are villanous forgeries which have wrecked the happiness of both of us."

"Impossible!" replied Frankum, "here is the envelope which contained them; it bears the Paris post-mark. Who could have sent us such forgeries from Paris?"

"That we shall soon discover. When, or from whom, did you receive the packet? Tell me but that!"

"From whom? why let me remember. Oh, I recollect; Mr. Barrow brought it me from the Post Office at ——"

"Then they are the work of Barrow!" exclaimed Arthur.

"Barrow!" interrupted De Malleville, and his niece sprang from his arms, at the mention of that hated name: "Barrow, did you say?" repeated the former.

"Yes, Monsieur de Malleville," continued Arthur, "recollect your own story, in connec-

tion with one of the same name, and judge not me, in this matter, until you shall know more of the doings of this man!"

"*Mon pauvre ami*, we may, indeed, have wronged you!"

"Arthur," broke in Mary, "thank God I see it all! This is the first time of my hearing that your letters had passed through the hands of Mr. Barrow!"

"No, for I, like an ass that I have been, never told you so before," stammered Frankum.

A message was here brought to De Malleville, that Mr. Barrow was in the house, wishing to see him immediately, on the most urgent business.

"My dear sister," said the former, "have him shown into a private room, that I may speak to him, without delay." And a few minutes afterwards the two were, accordingly, closeted together.

We ought here briefly to state, that after his interview with Dick Morrison, in whose hands,

to his utter dismay, he had seen the fatal document formerly given by himself to Ramsay, Barrow felt that his position had become one of the most imminent and tremendous peril. In fact, he saw, clearly enough, that all his schemes were frustrated, and that the gallows were staring him fully in the face, at a very little distance a-head. While old Ramsay's rapidly waning life lasted, he had no fear of Dick Morrison's threats being put in execution against him, because he had estimated the man's character with sufficient accuracy to know, that he would do nothing with the dreaded paper until the aged felon should be removed, by death, out of the possibility of his crimes being visited, in this world, with their deserved punishment. But, as soon as ever his accomplice might cease to exist, Barrow was aware that his only chance of escaping his own equally merited and certain fate would consist in immediate flight or concealment. In that case, all would be lost; even Mr. Hammond,

but lately so completely in his power, would slip his head out of the noose in which he had been just caught. There was no time, then, to be lost.

Now, it was while Barrow was anxiously pondering over this critical situation, in which the almost miraculous escape of Dick Morrison from being drowned, with the rest of his companions, in the "Petrel" had placed him, that he heard of the actual arrival, at Knowlewater, of the long lost heir to the estates—Philip Wildman. A previous letter of Arthur Maitland's had imformed Lawson, and through him, the whole neighbourhood had heard, that this stranger was a man of wealth and, station, residing in Paris; and no sooner, therefore, did he make his appearance in Devonshire than Barrow, who knew enough of the family mystery to make him feel sure, in his own mind, respecting the identity of the returned heir, determined upon a last effort advantageously to sell the secret of which he had be-

come the possessor, through the means of Watson; after which, he hoped to make good his retreat to the safety of a foreign land. Such were his reasons for seeking an interview with the stranger, De Malleville.

As the latter entered the room into which Barrow had been shown, his sinister visitor rose to meet him.

"Sir," he began, speaking, however, in excellent French, of which language his long residence on the Continent had made him thoroughly master, "I will explain to you, briefly and plainly, my object in desiring to see you. I have no doubt, but that, since your arrival beneath this roof, you have had reasons afforded you strong enough to induce you to believe, that you are intimately connected with the family of the Wildmans. Well, I can enable you, at once, to prove who and what you are, and moreover, to what you are entitled, here—I can establish your identity as Philip Wildman, who disappeared from this

country in his infancy, and has been reared in France; and I can make the recovery of the property, belonging to you, a very easy matter. Without my aid, to wrest the estates from their present holders, you must enter into an expensive law-suit, which may waste half their value, and occupy years to determine it: while, on the other hand, with my assistance you may, without difficulty, prove that you were fradulently conveyed away by the paid agents of your opponents, and thereby, without loss of either time or money, you will regain possession of your own."

De Malleville's eyes sparkled.

"How will you effect all this?"

"Look here—read this," replied Barrow, taking from his pocket the written statement of his father, the possession of which he had demanded and obtained from his friend Watson.

De Malleville uttered an exclamation of surprise, as his crafty visitor opened the paper

far enough to allow him to catch sight of the signature which it bore.

"And that man was your own father?"

"He was; and as this matter, since you have returned, must all, sooner or later, be revealed, and my character will be blasted by the discovery, I prefer disposing of the secret while it is worth your purchasing."

"Villain!" returned the other, "you are both detected as a scoundrel, and baulked of your expected reward. You have revealed your secret too late! See here—I have all the information you can give me, from a purer source. Read that letter!"

Barrow snatched the paper, and read a few lines of Mrs. Hammond's statement respecting the property.

"You see," pursued De Malleville, "that all your intentions are defeated by that letter. Thank God! the only injury which you have effected in this family is, that you have well nigh broken the heart of its youngest member,

by a series of forgeries, that had they but robbed her of as much money as they have of happiness, would have doomed you, for ever, to the felon's fate."

"*Au revoir!* Good-bye, monsieur!" said Barrow, with a malicious, mocking smile upon his lips; and ere De Malleville had time to speak another syllable, he had quitted the apartment, and a moment afterwards the house.

On re-entering the parlour, after this scene, Frankum was the first to address De Malleville.

"Here is farther proof, I rejoice to say, of the innocence of my old friend, Arthur; the paper on which the letters are written is not foreign, but must have been purchased at —— It is stamped with the name of a stationer, there, whom we all know well."

"*Mes amis*, no further proof is needed; my interview with that man has cleared up everything as to who has been the forger. The

motives we shall learn, no doubt, ere very long."

Lawson arrived at this stage of the proceedings; and having heard what had taken place, he remarked:

"Come, there is one knave found out; but let us not stop here—there is a greater criminal yet to be detected." And the speaker called upon De Malleville to assist him in carrying out his favorite scheme, which was that of visiting Isaac Ramsay, on the following morning, for the purpose of seeing whether the returned heir's sudden appearance, in the presence of the supposed murderer, would have any effect in extorting from him a confession of his guilt. It was agreed, that Frankum should be one the party, on the occasion of making the experiment; but when the morning came, and Mr. Greville, Lawson, and De Malleville were ready to set out for the cottage, that usually punctual person had not arrived, and they, accordingly, started without his company.

They found Ramsay in bed when they entered his forlorn and deserted home. Mr. Greville advanced first, having desired De Malleville to keep in the back ground, so as not to be observed until called forward by him. The aged felon looked wretchedly emaciated and worn; he lay upon his back, his glassy eyes wandering, to and fro, among the naked rafters and cobwebby thatch above him, his grey hairs straying, from his sunken temples, across the squalid pillow on which his head uneasily rested; both his thin, bony hands were clenched with convulsive firmness, and his arms rigidly straightened by his sides, upon the ragged bedding which concealed his once tall and powerful frame. On hearing the sound of strange footsteps, he started somewhat from his apparent mental ramblings, and turned upon his side.

"Ah, sir," said he to Mr. Greville, as his eye again beamed with even more than its wonted look of intelligence, "I am glad that

you are come; I made a promise, the other day, not to die alone. Have they not brought a stranger, too, along with you?"

The question, thus most unexpectedly put him, a good deal staggered the old vicar, as it did Lawson and Monsieur De Malleville also, for they had kept their intended visit a profound secret to all, except Frankum and themselves. Mr. Greville, however, soon recovered himself, hastily concluding that, nevertheless, in some way or other, their intentions had been made known to Ramsay, and he therefore replied with great deliberation:

"Yes! I have brought with me one who desires to ask you, before your approaching departure from this world, if you know anything of the fate of Alick Wildman."

"I know who he is," returned the dying man, "and am now ready to answer you the question, that I may, if possible, save him from all suspicion. You look at me, sir, as if you did not comprehend my words: let the in-

quirer, then, stand forward, and I will explain all."

De Malleville approached the bed, and Ramsay, uttering a shriek of despair and terror, fell back, insensible, upon his pillow. At that moment, Frankum and Dick Morrison entered the apartment.

"Gentlemen," began the latter, "I don't complain, although the poor old fellow was my own father, that you have by your experiment shortened his life, probably, by a few hours, but it was quite unnecessary so to have tried him. You would have heard him confess his crime, without your employing such means to urge him to it."

"Who is this person?" demanded Lawson, annoyed at the intrusion of a stranger at such a time.

"The same," said Frankum, "whom I heard declare, on Christmas eve, in Crazy Kate's cottage, that he was present at the murder of Alick Wildman. He is the old man's son; his

name is Richard Morrison, and he was the commander of the 'Petrel' smuggling sloop at the time of her recent wreck—"

"The child formerly imputed to Mr. Manly," interrupted Mr. Greville, "but whom, according to Kate's own assurance, I am now willing to believe to be the son of Ramsay."

"You are right," said Frankum, "and as I was the person who overheard him make his first confession, he came to me, last night, and told me all the particulars, which you shall hear by and bye. He has a tale, also, to tell, which will decide the fate of Barrow. But stay; Ramsay is again recovering—Monsieur De Malleville, you had better, once more, withdraw out of sight."

Isaac Ramsay, for the last time, re-opened his eyes and stared around upon his visitors; then addressing Mr. Greville, he said:

"Sir, have you been here long? Have I seen a frightful vision, or have I merely been dreaming? I fancied, that I was going to speak

to you regarding the great secret of my life, when poor Wildman, whom I slew years ago, came and stood before me—there, just where you are now standing."

"I think," interposed Mr. Greville, "that you are expecting the presence of your son here, Ramsay, are you not?"

"I am, sir; I saw him a fortnight ago, and he promised me, that when death should be hard upon me he would appear at my bed-side to bear witness to the confession I have to make, and which also concerns him. Have you seen anything of him?"

"I am here, as I promised you, father," said Dick, advancing.

"That's right," replied the old man, "and now, gentlemen, listen to me."

His eyes fixed upon the countenance of his son, and, for some seconds, he appeared unable to regain his utterance. At length, he spoke again:

"I have already told you, that I, alone, was

the murderer of Alick Wildman. On the night I did it, and after the fight at the inn, at ——, I met with Dick there, though neither of us then recognized the other. I had never seen him since his birth, and Kate Morrison was, therefore, wrong when she told the magistrates that both she and I knew who the stranger was, that had been found asleep with liquor in the highway. As God now hears me, I did not then know who he was; and it was her words, alone, that gave me the first suspicion of it. But that is of no importance, at present, and I will go on with my story. Believing that Dick was an utter stranger to me, and finding (although I did not ask him why,) that he was going towards Knowle-water, we first went into an ale-house to drink together, which we did, hastily, at the bar, and then I asked him to accompany me on my way home; for, as I was determined to murder Wildman that night, I hoped that, by making him my accomplice, I might myself

escape from all suspicion of the deed. We drank again afterwards, upon the road, from a small bottle of brandy, drugged with opium, which I generally carried in my pocket, because I could never meet with spirits sufficiently strong for my drinking. If not accustomed to such liquor, a small quantity of it was powerful enough soon to settle the best man alive, and as there was a dreadful storm of rain, and it was bitter cold, to boot, my companion drank deeper, perhaps, to keep himself warm, than I intended he should have done for my purposes. He became drowsy, and I was obliged to lead him, to get him to move onwards, at all. At last, we were overtaken by Wildman, as I knew we should be: I let go the arm of Dick Morrison, and allowed him to stagger forward in the dark alone, and then, when my victim came abreast of me, I drew a pistol from the pocket of my coat, and shot him through the body. The mare on which he was riding took fright, and almost escaped me, with the

dead man's foot sticking in the stirrup. However, fortunately, as I then thought, I got hold of her, and, having freed her of her lifeless burden, left her to gallop home by herself. I then endeavoured to arouse my companion, to assist me, but, although he seemed half-conscious of what had been going on, he was too far gone to be of any use to me, and I therefore left him to sleep on, or die, in the wet ditch, while I went back myself, took up the stiffening corpse, and carried it, hanging upon my shoulders, through the little lane near the spot, and then into farmer Simpson's orchard. They were at that season planting apple trees, and the workmen's tools I found near the gateway; I removed a tree, that had been set the day before, and having enlarged and deepened the trench, deposited the body in it, clothes and all, except the hat which I afterwards flung into the river at——. I replanted the tree over the grave, and feeling sure that, as so much new earth had been

previously scattered on the spot by the planters, my night's work would not be easily detected, I carried back the tools to their former place, and then made away across the adjoining fields, just before the storm began to cease. My flight, after the completion of that business, was like that of a hunted hare before the hounds. I doubled about, through fields and woods; I stopped beneath high hedges, and then went on again, cursing, every step I took, the increasing light of the rising moon. You know all that followed, except the years of biting, abject fear and suffering, through which I have since lived. Two images have always tracked and beset my path:—the image of Wildman, as he lay staring at me, with eyes that I could not close, upon the brink of the grave that I was digging for him, and that of the rattling gallows, upon which I had once, in my early youth, seen a fellow mortal hanging, like a load of filthy carrion, at Exeter. Oh! but," exclaimed the old man, in a louder voice,

"oh! but I have, after all, evaded that ghastly fate, and now the fires of——"

"Hush, hush!" interrupted Mr. Greville, "you may also, poor sinner, evade them, too, if——."

"Wait, sir," replied Ramsay, "do not interrupt me yet; I have another deed to speak of, and I feel that I am dying fast. Do not delay me. Dick, have you brought with you the paper I gave you?"

"I have," answered the latter; "here it is," and he produced the document signed by Barrow.

"I cannot go on," said the expiring felon, and the fatal death rattle sounded in his parched throat. "He will explain that to you," he added. "Speak, Dick, speak quickly, or I shall not have time to hear you, and confirm your account with my last breath!"

Ramsay's respiration increased in rapidity, and a deadlier pallor spread over his features. All present moved to his assistance, but his

eye flashed out again, and with a last, agonizing effort, he repeated, almost savagely, the command:—

"Go on!"

Morrison commenced speaking, his dying auditor making a slight approving motion with his head as he did so. Dick's story was soon told, and his recital of it spell bound those who heard him; but ere it was concluded, Ramsay was no more, although no one had observed the precise moment when his troubled spirit passed away from the presence of man into that of its creator. There lay the body, as though still intently listening; Mr. Greville stepped to the bed-side—the sinner's heart was motionless, and the film of death thickening over the eyes that had viewed such deeds of wickedness and crime.

The news of these events spread like wildfire throughout the neighbourhood, and the information relative to the part which Barrow had played in the affair of the "Petrel" at

once gave colour and substance to the vague suspicions that had long been, silently, springing up against him. No less than four anonymous letters, somewhat similar to the one formerly shown to the widow by Barrow himself, containing the most injurious slanders regarding her daughter, were brought, by different persons, to Knowle-water and placed in the hands of the family.

The whole scheme of unfinished villany was laid bare in a few hours; the country people around arose in a mass with a call of vengeance upon their lips, and the magistrates being, at last, prevailed on to do their duty in the matter, a warrant for the apprehension of Barrow was issued by them, and entrusted to the execution of the rural constables. It was, however, late at night before this tardy official authority was yielded, and the arrest was, therefore, ordered, by Mr. Fallow, not to take place until the following morning—a command which the reverend gentleman thought fit to give in order,

probably, to oppose the impatience of every one besides himself, and especially that of his old rival, Frankum, whose volunteered assistance, in the operation, he deprecated as a most unjustifiable interference with the regular proceedings of the proper officers.

But this delay of the magistrates only served to increase the eagerness of the excited populace; and as soon as daylight appeared, the cottage of Barrow was surrounded, on all sides, by dozens of the angry peasantry residing near it. The blinds, belonging to those apartments which he occupied, were closely drawn down, and the person under whom he tenanted them assured the multitude, without, that her lodger had locked all the doors on the inside, so that she could neither enter the rooms nor obtain any reply from their occupant. All she knew about him was, that he had always paid her an excellent rent, and that he took his supper, on the previous night, at his usual hour, when he returned from his accustomed walk.

At length Lawson and Frankum arrived, accompanied by two constables, at which the assemblage gave a shout of delight; and when, soon afterwards, Arthur Maitland, who it was now well known had suffered so much at the hands of Barrow, made his appearance, a second and more deafening cry was raised for him.

"Come, no more delay," vociferated the crowd; "summon the old wolf to surrender, and if he refuses, break open his den, at once!"

The officers having accordingly loudly demanded admission and no answer being returned them, they proceeded to force the doors by main strength. While this was being done, Frankum made a significant motion with his hand, across his throat, as much as to say, that he believed the inmate had destroyed himself to avoid a public exposure such as was then taking place—the expression of which opinion again called forth another hearty cheer, several persons, by way of termination to it, joining in one of those familiar, joyful whoops which sportsmen usually

employ at the death of their hunted prey. The wild impatience of the throng was beyond control; a dozen heavy frames gave additional power to the efforts of the invading ministers of justice, and, in a second or two more, the thick, bolted door crashed open beneath the overwhelming pressure brought to bear upon it. Alas! for the disappointment of all, the room was empty. On the floor lay a writing desk cleared of its contents, and beneath the grate the abundant evidences of letters and other documents that had been hastily consumed by the fire, while over the little mantel-piece was pinned the subjoined warning notice:—

"Let those, who may wish to follow me, beware how they attempt it; and let the boldest of my pursuers depend on it, that, should I be overtaken by him, he shall accompany me to that hell which is probably my own final destination!"

"M. B."

The consternation of the increasing mob, on hearing this horrible announcement read to them, surpasses description, and a few minutes of the most utter and blank confusion, if not of positive fear, succeeded. The rear of the premises was, then, carefully examined, and traces of the fugitives feet were discovered in the garden; from which circumstance, coupled with the fact that the window of a small chamber situated directly over the sitting-room was found unhasped, although the little white linen blind was drawn forward and the casement closed, it was plainly evident, that he had made his exit at that point, and so escaped under cover of the darkness of night.

"No matter," observed Lawson, addressing those who crowded round him, "the wretch has, it is true, eluded us for the present; but it cannot be for long, since he has no means of quitting the neighbourhood. I took the precaution, yesterday, of warning the hotel-keepers

at —— of the possibility of his attempting to fly from us, and I know, therefore, that for no sum of money which he may offer will he obtain a conveyance by which to effect his purpose."

"This all comes from the wilful delay of one of our magistrates," exclaimed Frankum.

"Ay, Pa'ason Fallow! shame! shame!" responded the spectators of the scene.

Dick Morrison, in company with one of the coast fishermen, was here seen approaching, at a rapid pace.

"What tidings, friend?" again demanded the baffled crowd.

"Why, my lads, that I and my mate here have tracked to his new shelter the cowardly villain whom you have all let slip, to be sure," replied Dick, coming up as he thus spoke. "I knew, before to-day, the scoundrel I had to deal with, and how, when the hour of necessity came, he would seek to escape; but thank God I have foiled his attempt."

"How so?—where is he?" asked Arthur Maitland, as a thrill of pleasure shot through him at the intelligence.

"He is, at this moment, wandering somewhere in the woods overlooking the channel," continued Morrison. "He offered this poor fellow a bribe of a hundred guineas, at break of day, to throw his fish overboard and carry him over to the Welsh coast in his boat; but he, having been, in common with the rest of his companions, forewarned some days ago by me, whom they have all long known as nowise unwilling, formerly, to drop them a keg or two of the poor "Petrel's" best brandy when it was hard weather for them at sea, refused the sum; and so Mr. Barrow is still on this side the water, either looking out for a tree upon which to hang himself in despair, or waiting for you to bring him to a more convenient gallows."

The loudest acclamations of applause and

joy rent the air at the conclusion of this speech; and arrangements were made for forthwith capturing the escaped criminal, dead or alive.

"Let us drive the woods with the fox-hounds," whispered Frankum to Lawson; "they have not left the kennel for weeks, and will now, therefore, hunt a man as readily as they would their own natural game."

"With all my heart, if you think so," was the brief reply; and Frankum started off to procure the assistance of his favourite pack, which, in more jovial hours, he had often declared competent to run down the devil himself, if once fairly set upon his scent.

It was now about nine o'clock, on an Autumn morning; the calm, fresh waves of the full tided channel were dancing, blue and sparkling, in the clear sunshine, and the magnificent woods, along the most romantic portion of its beautiful coast, spreading forth in all the radiant

enchanting glories of the rich bloom of their Autumnal tints. Within the deep shadow of those almost fairy bowers, skulked, at that hour, Matthew Barrow, his crimes detected, his hopes of further wrong destroyed, every means of escape cut off from him, and his miserable life become the hunted prey of an incensed and avenging multitude of his fellow beings. After his bribe had been rejected by the fisherman, he retreated, moodily, to those sylvan shades, and there, having carefully inspected, once more, the condition of the brace of pistols with which, as usual, he was armed, he resolved to await his approaching fate.

"All is over, then," he said, speaking to himself. "Watched by that man, as I have been, I had no other chance of flight than by means of those boats, and there, too, his cursed foresight has defeated me. Perhaps I ought to have tried it sooner, yet I hoped that my assumed coolness, in still remaining quietly

at my lodgings, would have thrown him off his guard, and given me a better opportunity for effecting my escape. Well, no matter; they may as well find me here as elsewhere. I have given them fair warning of my intentions to be avenged on my pursuers, and I will not break my promise. The sooner they now arrive the better—I am prepared, and, therefore, let them come!"

Bright and lovely the day advanced, and Barrow still paced, in dread anxiety, through the thickest regions of the woods—at one time halting, at some accidental opening, to look out upon the sunny sea, at another plunging headlong through briars and underwood, back into the more congenial gloom of the tall trees. The wild birds sang gladly around him, amid the branches, but in his fierce heart he cursed their melody. The sun peered in upon him, through the occasional loop-holes of the leafy canopy overhead, and he dashed, hastily, away from the

spot as 'though the long, tremulous, golden beams of the luminary had been the finger of Almighty wrath pointing out the place of his concealment. At last, he sat down, exhausted, on the darkest side of an enormous oak, and leaning his back against the boll of the tree, his mind, involuntarily, strayed to distant and very different scenes from the present. He dreamt rather than thought of his early days; he revisited the first home which his youth had known, and again walked, arm-in-arm, with old associates in the College gardens, at Oxford. Great fatigue, and the lulling influence of the warm, shady scene, were more potent with him than even his sense of coming danger, and Barrow, who had scarcely done so for a week previously, fell gradually asleep where he sat. This uneasy slumber was, however, but of short duration; distant sounds snapped the brief spell of happy forgetfulness and the doomed man suddenly started to his feet again, to realize the

full and dreadful consciousness that his pursuers were approaching. He then heard the voices of many people calling to one another, and, by attentively listening to the various points from which they proceeded, he could understand, that a line of advance had been formed so as to embrace almost the entire width of the wood.

The next thing which he distinguished was, that the nearing party were, also, evidently engaged in cheering on a pack of hounds. He drew out his pistols, and cocking them both, took one in each hand. Presently, a couple of fierce-looking, wiry-haired animals came sniffing along the ground towards him; when they had approached within a yard or two of the spot where he stood, they suddenly raised their heads, at which Barrow, most unwisely, stepped backwards some paces, and the sagacious instinct of the dogs being stimulated by this act of apparent fear, they immediately joined each other in a chorus of loud, baying,

menacing howls. In an instant, their more distant comrades caught up, eagerly, the warning cry, and the wood rang out, from end to end, with their echoing voices.—This scene is not entirely imaginary, the author having been himself present at one not very dissimilar.—Barrow was soon surrounded by the infuriated pack, and in danger of being torn to pieces. Once, he was on the point of sending a bullet through the body of the foremost, but then, remembering that he had yet worse enemies to encounter, he pocketed his weapon, and, wrenching off a straight, heavy branch from a young tree, he proceeded successively to fell to the earth the most daring of his besiegers. In this manner, he desperately fought his way downwards, through the brambly thickets, until he reached the edge of the precipitous cliffs.

But the hounds, though thus beaten back by their vigorous adversary, had performed their chief part in the task to be accomplished.

The human pack was now rapidly advancing to the attack, and for their appearance the felon waited, after having sprung across a wide chasm, and taken his stand upon a narrow shelf of rock, overhanging the sea. A considerable crowd of his pursuers speedily reached the spot, indicated by the continued baying of the hounds; but when they did so, not a man among them had sufficient hardihood to attempt leaping the gulf which the fugitive had, just before, so desperately cleared. Frankum, who headed this band, called upon him to surrender, at the same time pointing out to him the impossibility of his making his escape; in reply to which he merely exhibited his pistols, and forced from his lips a deriding and hideous laugh.

As there seemed now no hope, at this point, of dislodging their victim from his temporary stronghold, the party on the heights shouted to their companions, below, to proceed along the few sheep paths worn on the face of the

slanting cliffs, and so approach him from the side of the sea. This order was immediately obeyed—a body of about twenty men, led on by Dick Morrison, Arthur Maitland, and Lawson, undertaking the perilous enterprise. Thus attacked in front and in the rear, Barrow looked around for some additional means of defence, or rather of vengeance, upon his enemies. From the spot where he stood, he was enabled to survey, inch by inch, the whole line of way which the scaling company from the beach must follow, in order to get near him. Not many feet below the ledge of rock he then occupied, commenced a deep and precipitous ravine, which, he also perceived, they would have to ascend in the course of their advance. The upper extremity of this difficult passage was, moreover, strongly guarded by a vast fragment of stone, which had, at some remote period, fallen from the cliff above. In an instant, he resolved upon his plan of action; and having again warned his pursuers of the

danger they would incur, in case they dared to pass the broad chasm which lay between him and them, he lowered himself from the base of the beetling crag, and took up his new station beside the ponderous impediment which half filled the mouth of the defile we have just described So separated and concealed from those behind, he was now favorably situated for combating the detachment of his foes who were before him. Furthermore, to his great joy, he discovered, on more closely examining the stone, that he might certainly succeed, by a desperate effort, in moving it from its present ticklish seat, and send it rolling down the steep and narrow way.

"If I can but crush a few of them to atoms by this means," thought he, "I shall die satisfied with myself. Such a result will, at least, embitter their triumph over me!"

And now the time arrived for trying the remorseless experiment. Dick Morrison and

his associates having entered the defile, and approached within about a hundred and fifty paces of him, caught sight of their dangerous victim, upon whom they called to surrender himself, quietly, into their hands.

"Never!" exclaimed he, again displaying his pistols—"you shall never take me alive, if I can help it."

Several stood still at this determined menace; but the majority, observing that Dick was also well armed, hesitated not to accompany him, onwards, to the encounter. Barrow comprehended their resolve, and, gliding behind the fragment of rock, while his enemies raised a simultaneous cheer, believing that he intended again to fly from them, he applied his powerful shoulder to the heavy mass, and set it in motion, down the steep.

This desperate and fiendish achievement was not more unexpected by the advancing party, than its consequences appeared likely to prove

destructive to them. From side to side of its narrow path rolled, thundering on, the huge and ugly body, ploughing up the barren soil, striking out sparks of fire from the multitude of smaller stones which it drove before it, and, at last, enveloping itself in a confused cloud of dust and splinters.

When first this liberated mass was seen to move, the crowd below, uttering yells of despair, turned round to fly. Dick Morrison, at the moment, was close by the side of Arthur Maitland, upon whose shoulder, as he halted, with the most complete presence of mind, to meet the coming danger, he laid his sinewy grasp, and then, by a single jerk of his vigorous arm, flung him on one side, in time to rescue him from the violent death by which he would, otherwise, have certainly been overtaken. But the gallant deliverer escaped not, thus, himself; and when Arthur looked about to thank him for his generous service, he saw

Dick stretched upon the ground, apparently lifeless, at a considerable distance from where he had so lately been standing.

As for Barrow, he had no sooner detached the murderous fragment from its place, and observed it fell to the earth the leader of his invading foes, than he instantly prepared to follow up the advantage which he had gained. Rushing down the precipice, towards the spot where he perceived Arthur Maitland, he discharged one of his pistols at him, and then, seeing that, in his haste, he had missed his aim, he attempted to stop himself, to repair his mistake. Fortunately, however, he found it impossible easily, to arrest the impetus, which his impatience had given him. It was now Arthur's turn for revenge: a heavy, brass-barreled pistol was still remaining in the girdle of poor Dick Morrison, and rapidly availing himself of this very efficient weapon, he dashed forward, with all the speed he could

employ, compatible with the possibility of preserving a secure footing, to overtake the great and mortal enemy of his life. Barrow, who had halted as soon as it was in his power to do so, turned round, and, once more, the two combatants, who had formerly met on such unequal terms, stood face to face.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Arthur, "for at length giving me this opportunity of repaying a debt I have long owed you. Look to yourself, then; coward as you are, it shall never be said you have not had fair play!"

"Poor, puny idiot!" returned Barrow, with a sneer, "I can, at least, easily silence your prating."

As he said this, each took a deliberate aim at the other; the reports of two pistol shots rang in the air, nearly at the same moment, and Barrow fell dead upon the spot, pierced through the chest by his adversary's bullet.

Frankum and his party here rejoined their

companions, the prevailing joy, in the hearts, of all, that had taken a share in the events of the hour being vastly increased by the discovery, that although Dick Morrison and two others had received the most serious injuries from the rolling mass of rock, neither of the three were so bad as to forbid good hopes of their ultimately recovering.

Of the subsequent proceedings at Knowlewater we have little here to relate. The existing engagement of Aurélie and Arthur Maitland, and the prospect of Mary Wildman's now becoming a wealthy heiress seemed, plainly, to point out the propriety of no further meeting taking place, between the long estranged lovers. The worst effect of Barrow's villany thus survived him; and Monsieur De Malleville, who likewise fully appreciated all the difficulty of the case, in vain attempted to discover a satisfactory way of obviating it. That Mary still retained the first place in

Arthur's heart, was sufficiently evident, both from his unwillingness to see her, and his impatience to return to France, added to an air of dejection, and reserve of manner utterly at variance with his natural disposition. These symptoms of suppressed affection were duly reported, by Frankum, in the quarter where they may be supposed to have created the most interest, with the kind intention on his part, of endeavouring to induce Mary to offer such encouragement as would, he believed, at once remove the obstacles which untoward and painful circumstances had thrown in the way of her return to happiness with her old admirer. That the chance of succeeding to a considerable fortune on the one side, and an engagement with a French girl on the other should prove powerful enough permanently to divide two long attached hearts, was a thing totally inexplicable by any of the theories of the art of love within the knowledge of the

good-natured mediator. To every entreaty, however, which he could make use of, Mary refused to yield her consent; not under pretence of no longer loving Arthur, but steadily urging the paramount claims upon his affection of her more fortunate rival, Aurélie.

Some weeks passed over, in the course of which the negotiations with the Hammond family, relative to the restoration of the property, were regularly proceeded with, and finally, a transfer of the whole was made to the rightful owner, with the exception of a few thousand pounds of funded stock which De Malleville, with great difficulty, prevailed on Mrs. Hammond to retain for her life, in token of the gratitude which he assured her he felt towards her, personally, for the honourable part she had taken in the important and most painful transaction. Of course, before all this was effected, additional proofs were procured, for conclusively establishing the identity of the

returned heir; but as so important a witness as the solicitor, Watson, was now, in consequence of the death of Barrow, easily obtainable, and as but few links in the chain of evidence really remained to be supplied, the matter was soon satisfactorily terminated.

At last, the time arrived when Monsieur de Malleville proposed returning to Paris. Further reflection on the position in which Arthur Maitland stood with regard to Aurélie had only increased his uneasiness. No sufficient reason presented itself to his mind for forbidding his marriage with her, and even if he found a good one it appeared to him, that he now lacked the right to interfere in a question so nearly touching the happiness of his adopted niece. But supposing that he did resolve still to employ his old authority, how could he, with safety, do so? Was he prepared to snap the bonds of a most sacred engagement, because he believed that the full measure of Arthur's

love would not accompany the promises he had made to Aurélie? Was he warranted in supposing, that the young man had pledged himself to her purely out of disappointment, and without entertaining for her the least real affection? Lastly, was he, at his sober time of life, to prefer passion to honour, or to conclude that a man of high principle and regard for his plighted word, even at a sacrifice, would not turn out, in the end, as good a husband as though he had married solely through love? These considerations decided him to do nothing, beyond once more offering his counsel and advice, and accordingly he sought an opportunity for speaking to Arthur upon the subject. This was afforded him, shortly afterwards, in the course of a morning's walk which they were taking together in the neighbourhood.

"Arthur," said he, "I have hitherto found it difficult to speak to you on a point in which you know how deeply I am interested. The

events which have taken place here have explained to me the motives for a line of conduct, on your part, towards Aurélie, while you were in France, which, I confess, I once thought wayward and inconsistent. You know what I mean, *mon ami*, therefore I need not further explain; but you are now engaged, and I fear that that fact is, at present, weighing painfully upon your spirits, inasmuch as it appears to separate you from one for whom your affection is, at least, of an older date."

"Monsieur de Malleville," replied Arthur, "let me ask you not to press this matter further; my honor is pledged to Aurélie, and my best feelings belong to her."

"Nevertheless, your heart is in the possession of my real niece, Mary Wildman."

"That I must not think of; I have been betrayed, but my betrayer has paid the price of his treachery

"Yet, my dear boy," continued De Malle-

ville, pressing his hand with the solicitude and tenderness of a father, "reflect well on what you are going to do; marriage may be contracted in a moment of enthusiasm, but, remember, that it lasts for a life time, and, once entered into, is not to be repented of. Take time to consider; act not in haste. Explain, confide your case to Aurélie; you know her nobleness and generosity —let her decide for you."

"It is of no use, Monsieur de Malleville," returned Arthur, "I must not, I ought not to listen to your suggestions. The very qualities to which you allude, in Aurélie, have already decided me. Is it reasonable or just, that because I am aware of her devoted nature I should call upon her, by a sacrifice of herself, to atone for the accident of my destiny? Oh, sir, I can but thank you for thus reminding me of her virtues!"

"Arthur," added De Malleville, "if by mentioning those virtues I have done the precise

thing which I desired not to do, and have so confirmed you in your resolution, it was, upon my honour, because, in truth, I did not know a single fault in her, by displaying which I might have better succeeded in my purpose. On the other hand, I put it to you, is it fair, is it honest or right in you to offer to such a woman the homage of a divided heart?"

Arthur's emotion amounted almost to an agony. "Do not," he exclaimed, "misjudge me; words will not express to you the complication of my present feelings; yet wait, and see the devotion with which I will surround her when she becomes my wife."

"Exactly; that is what I foresee—you may meet her, daily and hourly, with the most self-sacrificing worship of forms, nay even of respect, admiration and esteem, but if the incense of an unmistakeable love be still wanting, think you that the omission can be long concealed? and then—"

"Stay, stay!" interrupted the young man; then more calmly he said, "speak even plainer than you have done—tell me, at once, if you would have me break all my vows to Aurélie?"

"I have not asked you to do so," replied De Malleville; "my advice to you is, simply and frankly, to explain everything that has occurred to her, that she may act as she thinks best for you both."

"And so, if, in the event of her generosity triumphing over the scorn she would be well entitled to feel for me, she should absolve me from my engagement, I am to make Mary Wildman debtor to her for a love that would be no longer worthy of the acceptance of either? Why, Monsieur De Malleville, what a paltry, miserable wretch I should be! No, I do not disguise the extent of my love for Mary, nor will I ever consent to adopt so poor a means (excuse my saying so) for healing the

wounds which I have been made the involuntary instrument of inflicting upon her. I have, as you must see, but one course to pursue—let us return to Paris: My father is now much better; I have his entire approval of my marriage with Aurélie, and my life shall be spent in securing her happiness. Mary, too, will nobly applaud my determination, and God, I trust, will recompense her for the past."

"Well," concluded Monsieur De Malleville, "you have, I believe, the best of the argument; let it be as you propose: and now the sooner we depart for France the better."

On the night previous to their departure, Mary Wildman received the following letter:

"My Dearest Mary,

"Finding, from your uncle, that you have heard and approved, as I knew you would do, the motives which are

guiding my present conduct, I feel that, before again quitting England, I may once more be permitted to address you in terms of the fondest endearment. I dare not trust myself to see you, lest my resolution to do my duty should fail under the bitter trial; but, surely, betrayed and sacrificed as we have both been by a too successful enemy, I commit no injustice towards her to whom my faith is now pledged, in declaring that my love for you is, and, I fear, will ever remain, unalterable. Oh, Mary, how much, how cruelly we have been wronged, and what pangs I suffer to find myself obliged, by all the calls of honour, to yield up the rich blessing of your affection at a moment when I have discovered a thousand fresh reasons for prizing it above all else on earth! Do not blame me for this last expression of my real feelings; nature has a voice as loud, at least, as that of duty; Aurélie herself, if she knew

all, would feel no jealousy or anger at my words—it is no disloyality to her—but my heart is crushed beneath the load which oppresses it, and its sighs of anguish must and will have vent. It seeks but this one indulgence, this one consolation to nerve it, afresh, for hereafter; to arrest its rebellious struggles against the hand of fate, and prepare it, quietly, to accept the gloom and desolation of the future, in place of that sunshine of happiness which should have gilded it. But I must not prolong these complaints, of the intense selfishness of which I am fully aware; and yet when I attempt to lay down my pen, and the thought recurs to me, that, having once closed this letter, I must never again speak to you of affection, all my fancied strength turns, in a moment, to childish weakness. How shall I add the final seal to my paper, and so convert it into the cold and never to be re-opened grave of my heart's first,

best and truest love? It is this thought which causes me still to delay bidding you adieu. It is time, however, that I did so—Why should I, any longer, torture you with this exhibition of my grief, when you have the same sorrow to endure? Mary, good bye. God bless you! That is a prayer which I am not forbidden to offer up for you! We leave to-morrow morning. For the last time, I may subscribe myself

"Yours, through life affectionately,

"ARTHUR MAITLAND."

That the perusal of this letter caused Mary some hours of more unalleviated pain and misery than she had yet experienced, during the course of her many trials, may be easily supposed. It did, in fact, for a while, lay her spirit in the dust, and quench, in the blackness

of despair, that faint ray of hope that had, for so long, although unknown to herself, been dimly struggling in the inmost recesses of her bosom. Hers was, truly, a night of sorrow with no joy to which to look forward, in the morning. And, yet, when did ever the Divine promise of approaching succour fail of its fulfilment to a suffering human being, except in the dreadful instances where an impious, suicidal hand of weak, impatient flesh has been unbelievingly raised to frustrate the merciful design of the universal law? Mary waited humbly; and soon the beacon light of peace, that had for an instant, as it were, been turned not taken away, shone out again to her, across the rolling waves. An invisible arm kept her from sinking, led her to the shore, and still supported her when there.

We shall conclude this chapter with the simple record, that, within a few days from this

date, Kate Morrison died comforted and happy in the presence of her son, Dick, who had been carefully conveyed to her cottage, for the purpose of being by her when her last hour should arrive.

CHAPTER VII.

Whom will you send to London town,
To Parliament, and a' that?

Burns.

It happened, fortunately enough for diverting both the minds and tongues of the neighbourhood from the painful subjects with which we have been recently occupied, that a general election took place in the country, at about

this time, and a furious contest was commenced for one of the vacant seats belonging to the little borough which we have, so often, alluded to, as situated within a few miles of Knowlewater. Sir Stephen Brydges, the tory member for that place, had, as the reader will recollect, given great offence, some weeks previously, to a most important personage connected with the constituency, in consequence of the over hot haste with which he had sought to gain the heart and hand of Miss Julia Grimshaw.

At parliamentary elections, as at present managed, are fought out ten or fifteen pitched battles of private hatred and revenge for every single one that is waged on questions of public concern. The welfare of the empire is as nothing in comparison with the satisfaction of indulging in individual spites; and it has often occurred to us (although we have not, as yet, written a letter to the *Times* on the sub-

ject), that if every voter, known to be at enmity with a brother elector, or having a wife or daughter either jealous of the position, or offended at the airs of the female portion of the family of Mr. Somebody else, also an elector, were temporarily disfranchised, a vast deal of the strife and cost of elections would be, thereby, avoided. Such a clause would be novel, perhaps, in an act of parliament, but we are certain it would work well. Here, then, is a suggestion that, if well supported, might make the political reputation of any young member of the House of Commons.

Well, Mrs. Grimshaw had resolved upon unseating Sir Stephen Brydges; and as our plan was not, then, before the world, as, we trust, it will soon be, now, she opened her campaign for that constitutional purpose. Her trusty agent, Mr. M'Doual, became busy in the borough; and an address was put forward, in proper season, by a new candidate, spoken

Who must decide where the enm
ists? both parties would dispute.
words" [illegible]

of as the "third man," acting under the immediate patronage, and backed by all the influence of the powerful mistress of Ackworth Hall. The electors took up arms at this stirring summons, and the usually quiet, nay, almost sleepy, little town grew at once as active and bustling (only rather more noisy) as a disturbed ant hill. Placards crowded the walls; meetings were held; the taverns filled; and the hustings, like an immense mushroom, arose in the course of a few hours.

But let us pass over the remaining preliminaries, that we may come, at once, to the "day of nomination." Sir Stephen Brydges, having been proposed and seconded, in the usual kind of speeches, rose to address the constituency. He said, that his claims upon the borough were of long standing; that he had held one of its seats for nearly fifteen years, stood four contested elections, and spent not less than 200,000*l.*, during the period of his connection

with the place. That he should be now opposed he thought excessively hard—but the hardship was doubly annoying, inasmuch as that the opposition, with which he was threatened, proceeded not from any neglect of his representative duties, not from political reasons, in short, but from private and *female* pique against him. "Yes, gentlemen," thundered out the baronet, "I am opposed, and you are to be terrified, overawed, and coerced, in your electoral functions, by a very long *petticoat* aided by a very long purse!" Here a storm of mingled hissing and cheers drowned the voice of the speaker. On its subsiding, he continued:—He would explain to them all the circumstances.—("No, no—we'll have no longer a blackleg to represent us." "Yes, we will have rather him than Mrs. Grimshaw's new poodle there.") He would show the town who was attempting to rule them; it was a lady, whose character they all knew well, and he

would tell them why she was become, so suddenly, his enemy. It was purely owing to his having made a matrimonial proposal to a fair person, at Ackworth Hall, at an unlucky moment—at a moment when her worthy mother had higher game in view for her—that was the true reason of her present enmity towards him. Would the electors of ——— be parties to such doings? Would they not rather adopt the Salic law, at once, for preventing a silly, ambitious woman thus trying to rule over them? He believed that they would; and he, therefore, should resume his seat, in the full confidence of being again chosen one of their independent members."

Mr. Stinger, the famous electioneering agent of Sir Stephen, here presented himself, and begged to be allowed to say a few words, befor the new man was proposed to the meeting. He observed, that a certain set of persons, among the crowd, had interrupted the

last speaker, and had attempted to cast the foulest stains upon his moral character; but that character, he was happy to say, was far above all imputations of the kind employed. It was, in fact, a mirror of purity, which reflected in it all the social and political virtues that could be named, and from which the soils of an adversary's foul breath vanished as soon as the scoundrel's impure lips were closed. Sir Stephen's honour, also, needed no defence from him or any one else. It was known; had been again and again tried, and never yet found wanting. He wished, with all his soul, he could say as much of his enemies. Some of them, who appeared as innocent at home as they were known to be imbecile and incompetent in the transaction of the affairs with which they would, however, meddle, went to a distance to commit their peccadilloes; and he had reason to know, that some of them, who had acted in this way, actually owed, at

that very instant, the preservation of their ricketty reputations to the veiling kindness of the worthy Baronet, whom they still dared to malign by the impudent wagging of their ungrateful tongues. ("Explain, explain," roared the battling, confused auditory.) "If we should, after this warning, be dared to do so," replied Mr. Stinger, "we will explain, gentlemen, I promise you, and that to the dismay and consternation of our enemies."

Mr. M'Douall upon this, rose to say, that he did not at all understand the hint which was intended to be conveyed.

"Wait till the proper time comes for opening your innocent eyes, then," exclaimed his antagonist; and again the crowd hissed and cheered, although neither party at all comprehended the mysterious language which they heard.

The Ackworth candidate, having been, at length, proposed, came forward to speak. He

was what may be termed a very "*green*" young man, with very glossy whiskers, delicate waist, spotless kid gloves, and an effeminate voice. The multitude laughed at him; threw a little tail piped cur upon the hustings, and began barking at him, in all directions. The young aspirant to legistorial honours was about retiring in anger and disgust, but Mr. M'Douall took him by the hand, and claimed for him a hearing.:—

Silence ensued, and he began to speak.

"Gentlemen," said he, looking bigger than his size quite warranted, "I am a stranger here, it is true, but if you mean to say that I am a dog, or the slave of any one, I deny both of those injurious and impolite accusations. What is the insinuation of casting at me this poor dumb animal, with its tail so cruelly tied, I should like to inquire? ("Well done, young champion of freedom," shouted a fellow in the throng before him,

alluding to a paragraph, which had appeared in his published address.—"A cheer for the freedom of dogs' tails!")

Once more, the uproar of the crowd recommenced, the new candidate continuing to speak, without a syllable of what he was uttering being heard, even by those who stood near him on the platform.

"This will never do," exclaimed M'Doual impatiently in his ear; "you will ruin us, if you go on speaking in that manner. You are too mealy-mouthed by half, for a mob like this."

But it was of no use; the Ackworth candidate stood no longer any chance of being listened to, and wisely, therefore, he withdrew, pocketting his defeat, together with the white cambric handkerchief, with which he had vainly sought to emphasize the rounded periods of his carefully prepared, but feeble, eloquence. The meeting broke up, after hearing a decla-

ration from the mayor that, in spite of the coarse insults which he had just received, the "third man" would, nevertheless, take the real opinion of the electors, by going to the poll, on the second day from the present.

We shall not describe the series of squibs and caricatures, which afterwards succeeded one another, in rapid succession, to the great amusement of the town; but there was, however, one, which we are bound here to notice. It was a large drawing, rudely, but strongly painted on a broad piece of canvass, and so carried through every street in the place, representing the easily recognized figure of Major Grimshaw, who was seen depositing, apparently in considerable alarm, a basket, containing a naked infant, at the gate of a building, over which was written, in huge characters, "Foundling Hospital;" while, far in the background, by way of completing the

story, he was beheld, led by the tip of his ear by his amiable wife, entering the front door of Ackworth Hall, and bearing on his shoulders the inscription:—"The price of my naughtiness, while in London." Here, then, was a pretty clear explanation of the matter to which Mr. Stinger, the agent of Sir Stephen Brydges, had alluded in his speech upon the hustings. Forthwith, the baronet was summoned, by a laughing, noisy mob, to appear at the window of his hotel, to answer a variety of questions regarding the real meaning of the picture; but he was found to be peculiarly reserved upon the point, contenting himself with making a few sly winks, and an imperfectly heard declaration about the frailty of all flesh.

The next morning, Stinger and two others of Sir Stephen's committee men went on a secret and important mission to Ackworth Hall. Having informed the servant that their business

was with Mrs. Grimshaw, not the major, they were shown into the library to await her appearance. In a few moments afterwards, she entered the room, looking unusually stern and haughty.

"Is it in reference to the election that I am honored with this early call?" she began.

"It is, madam," replied Stinger.

Mrs. Grimshaw rang the bell and requested the immediate attendance of Mr. Mc. Doual, and the gentleman who was with him in the next room. The command was quickly obeyed, the agent being accompanied, on his entry, by a person dressed in black clothes, wearing a dirty white neck tye, and having straight hair, divided over the brow *à la* John Wesley. The deputation glanced at each other, and then proceeded to business.

"You are aware, of course, Mrs. Grimshaw, of the result of yesterday's proceedings," observed Stinger.

"I am sir, and of the insulting conduct shown to the talented candidate whom I have been the chief means of introducing to the electors."

"Madam," returned the other, "we cannot hold ourselves responsible for the behaviour of an electioneering crowd."

"You can; it was the work of your own party," broke in Mc. Doual and his companion. "We know all about it now; and we shall expose your low practices, sir. The dog which was thrown upon the hustings was tail-piped, in the morning, previous to the hour of meeting, in your vile committee room. We have discovered, moreover, where you procured the tin kettle employed for the abominable purpose; and we find, in conclusion, that the whole of your committee were carefully drilled, over night, with closed doors, at Sir Stephen's hotel, to imitate the barking of dogs. Oh, you cannot elude our penetration, and these facts

shall go forth to the country, that be assured of."

"We dare you to make such a statement in public," replied Stinger, secretly hoping that they would keep their word, knowing that in case of their doing so the "third man" would inevitably be, for ever, buried beneath the weight of ridicule which had already so well nigh ruined all his chances of success. "Besides," he added, "even were what you say true, which I emphatically deny, we might still ask, who first began to throw dirt? However, our errand here is not for the purpose of quarreling, but of coming, if possible, to some satisfactory arrangement. Your candidate will not obtain fifty votes, that is certain; our proposal, therefore, is, that he shall be forthwith withdrawn, and we will undertake, in return, to pay all his present expenses, which cannot amount to less than somewhere about £1, 500. We will, even, go a step further, and engage to fulfil your

pledge, given to five and twenty of the old freemen, to keep them in a continual state of intoxication, locked up in your tavern, for a period of one month subsequent to the day of election, the four sabbaths included."

The Wesleyan, here, raised his hands, in pious horror, at the thought.

"Does the reverend gentleman intend to imply that he has not, himself, joined in the ratification of such a promise?" inquired Stinger.

"Most solemnly I do," was the reply.

"Then be good enough, sir, to read this copy of the agreement."

"Unscrupulous man!" ejaculated the other, having looked on the paper: "the words are ample refreshment for one month."

"But is there no other clause, there, that will explain to us the full meaning of that very vague expression, 'ample refreshment,' asked Stinger. "What does this signify; 'all the

parties to be daily indulged with breakfast in bed; the coffee to be prepared with a sufficiency of brandy, instead of the usual quantity of milk; deviled chicken and broiled bones at discretion?"

"This is not business," interposed Mc. Douall.

"At least, it is a very queer business," added another of the opponents, and Mr. Stinger proceeded, by turning towards Mrs. Grimshaw:—

"Do you accept the terms we offer you, madam?"

"Unquestionably not, Mr. Stinger; we have demanded, and intend going to, the Poll."

"You had better not, Mrs. Grimshaw, or we shall retaliate on some of your own party for the slanders which have been heaped on the character of Sir Stephen Brydges. Has your attention been directed to a certain drawing,

on canvass, which has made its appearance in the borough? That amusing piece of art, madam, tells a story which is "founded on fact," as we are prepared to show, in the event of our present offer being, unwisely, rejected."

"I have heard, sir," returned the mistress of the Hall, her lips quivering, and the blue veins swelling on her forehead, with excessive anger, "I have heard, with indignation and scorn, of that infamous caricature. But do you intend to insinuate, for a moment, that Major Grimshaw has ever been guilty of such a moral impropriety as is there implied? Gracious heavens! the Major is the last man living to be thus accused. He would not dare—he is incapable of committing such an outrage upon the feelings of his family. He respects both himself and me too much to do such a thing. My husband is peculiarly circumspect in all his ways."

"Yet, the best of men have their weak mo-

ments, Mrs. Grimshaw," replied Stinger, smiling.

"Impudent, audacious slanderer!" exclaimed the incensed wife. "Quit my house, immediately! No, stay—I will expose your malice, by, at once, confronting you with Major Grimshaw."

She rang the bell, with violence.

"Tell your master I want his presence here, without delay, Thomas."

The Major, presently, made his appearance in the library, feeling very uneasy at being so peremptorily summoned there; and not by any means comforted when he observed the angry expression of his wife's countenance.

"Now, sir," she said, turning again to the agent, "repeat your falsehood, in my husband's hearing."

"May I beg of you, Mrs. Grimshaw," returned the other, "not to discompose yourself? We are only acting in self defence,

without, in the least, desiring to injure the reputation of any one, if we can avoid it. Sir Stephen, for whom I am engaged, has been called a bankrupt, and a blackleg. We wish for no public exposure, but we are determined—"

"Really, Mr. Stinger, this is shocking, in the extreme; your language grows worse and worse. Do you presume, do you dare, under his own roof, and in his own presence and mine, to couple the Major's name with the words 'public exposure,' and allusions to a foundling child? Grimshaw, my dear, what does this person mean?—why do you not speak to him?"

"Madam," interposed the imperturbable agent, perceiving the Major's momentary confusion, and knowing the advantage he should gain by increasing it, ere there was time for further explanation, "I will venture to put one direct question to Major Grimshaw, or you

may yourself ask it him, if you think proper. Was he not, while last in London, before the magistrate, in Marlborough-street, respecting a case of affiliation?"

Mrs. Grimshaw looked impatiently towards her husband, whose face was deeply dyed with crimson.

"Speak, Major, instantly," she exclaimed —"deny this foul imputation!"

"Let him, first of all, answer my question," added Stinger. "Were you not, sir, before the Marlborough-street magistrate, about the end of last November?"

"I must admit that I was," replied Grimshaw; "but it was not—"

"No equivocation, Major; doubtless, you had excellent reasons for being there; but did your wife know anything of the matter? Answer me that, before we hear any explanation from you."

"Not a word, Mr. Stinger, upon my honour

as a lady! Good heavens! Major Grimshaw, have you, thus shamefully, deceived and dishonoured me? Are you the father of an infamous, good-for-nothing, disgraceful child? Oh! I now see it all; the light of truth flashes upon me; I remember your unexplained absence from our hotel, on the morning after Lady Lynden's party."

"My dear! Mrs. Grimshaw, my love! hear what I have to say. This is all a mistake."

"Silence, you abandoned, degraded man! I will not listen to a single excuse from you. You have soiled and defamed the honour of your wife and family. Shame upon this grey-haired profligacy!"

And Mrs. Grimshaw rushed, in despair, out of the room. The Major followed her; and, in a minute or two afterwards, M'Doual, and his reverend colleague did the same, leaving their opponents masters of the field.

"Come," said Stinger, "I flatter myself that I have made the most of our case. But we must lose no time; the arrow just sent home has but a weak barb, and cannot, therefore, be expected to stick very fast, or long, in the flesh of our adversaries. Sir Stephen, as we know, is really, after all, a great liar, and we cannot rely much upon the truth of this tale; dispatch alone can insure our present victory. Let us, at once, come to our ultimatum, and try to secure a treaty by a *coup de main.*"

He got up, and rang the bell resolutely.

"Wait a second, Thomas," he said to the old servant who answered it; "I want you to carry a note to your mistress."

Then taking up a pen, he wrote as follows:

"MADAM,

"We entreat you, for your own sake, to reconsider our recent offers for an

arrangement of our differences. Return us a written promise, that your candidate shall be withdrawn from the contest, and we will pay all expenses, and contradict every rumour in connection with the painful subject we have just brought under your notice. We must have your answer in ten minutes, or we shall take our departure, and you must abide by the consequences.

"Your's obediently

"JOSEPH STINGER."

To this bold demand, the servant presently returned with the annexed brief, but damping reply:

"SIR,

"Mrs. Grimshaw requests me, as a friend, to answer your note. Fortunately for

the peace and honour of this estimable family, I happen to know something of the circumstances under colour of which you have just attempted one of the most scoundrelly tricks that has, perhaps, ever been employed by the very lowest and most infamous of electioneering tactitians. The candidate for the seat at ——— will, therefore, not be withdrawn.

"Your obedient servant

"Ernest De Lisle."

"This now is confoundedly provoking; it will certainly ruin all our plans and hopes of success, unless we can, by hastening back to ———, surprise the electors into some pledge in our favour, ere this check be known."

Whereupon, the deputation made a rapid retreat towards the borough.

We pass by, without relating them at any length, several of the subsequent proceedings

at Ackworth Hall:—the disgust and abhorrence with which Mrs. Grimshaw, at first, spoke of her husband's conduct; her narration of the whole affair to Lady Lynden, whose ears, she knew, it must soon reach even if she did not mention it to her; Ernest's fortunate exculpation of his kind host from the serious charge alleged against him, while he, at the same time, laid the guilt at once at the door of Sir Stephen Brydges; and, lastly, the disgrace, however much diminished, under which the Major still suffered, in the eyes of his wife, for having so far forgotten himself as to have been, in any way, concerned in so odious a business as that of guaranteeing, even second hand, the maintenance of an illegitimate infant.

News of the sharp practice used by Sir Stephen's party got quickly abroad, and failed not to arouse against them the indignation and counter-working activity of many persons who would, otherwise, have held themselves quietly

aloof from the great electoral strife. In the afternoon, of the same day, a private meeting of several of Major Grimshaw's friends took place, at the Hall, for the express purpose of considering how they might best avenge the insult which had been so wantonly offered him by his unscrupulous opponent. Various propositions were put forward for adoption by the assembly; the chief one being strongly urged by Mr. Fallow to the effect, that an action for defamation of character should be immediately commenced against the baronet, or his agent. This resolution was on the point of unanimous acceptance, when Frankum entered the room. He said, that he had just arrived, at full gallop, from the borough of ———, where he had been, for the last few hours, in consultation with Lawson, and one or two other influential friends, upon the best means of securing a triumph for the Major over his malignant foes; and that he had been expressly sent by his associates to

communicate the fact to the party which they had expected would meet at the Hall, that afternoon, but especially to obtain the consent of Major and Mrs. Grimshaw to two most important steps which Lawson and himself had ventured to propose should be taken without delay. In the first place, the spirited letter addressed to the constituency by Mr. De Lisle, explaining, fully, the circumstances under which the Major had appeared in a London police court, had induced the Mayor of the Town to allow the calling of another meeting, that evening, for the purpose of having the communication publicly read to the assembled electors. The propositions, therefore, which he was deputed to make to the family and friends of Major Grimshaw were, that the candidate already proposed to them should be at once withdrawn, and the Major himself put forward, in his place. This might seem to some persons a hazardous move, perhaps, but with

the feelings in his favour which De Lisle's defence of him would be sure to raise, there was every reason to believe that he would be triumphantly elected to fill one of the vacant seats, to the exclusion of Sir Stephen Brydges.

The Rev. Mr. Fallow naturally objected to this course, as it would, in the event of its turning out successfully, place the Major at such an unattainable height above himself. A stout debate ensued on the subject. The clerical magistrate urgently declaimed in favour of the law prosecution, because, in truth, as a second motive, he believed that kind of public exposure of the case would, most effectually, damage the reputation of his judicial colleague, for whom his friendship was of that sort which seeks every opportunity of covertly doing mischief, instead of rendering any assistance or sympathy to the feigned object of its enduring and disinterested attachment. Mrs. Grim-

shaw, however, took a different view of the matter; and, having ascertained of Frankum that he, Lawson, and other friends, of known power and weight in the borough, were only waiting for her permission to give the enemy battle, she forthwith decided on placing the whole of her interests in their hands, feeling well convinced that if anything could make up for the proved deficiency of her own personal influence, it was to be found in the intelligence, energy, and skill of these unexpected and unlooked-for volunteers to her cause, and the affection with which they were universally regarded in the town in question.

Within less than half an hour afterwards, Frankum, with the Ackworth Hall blue ribbon stuck in his hat-band, and his horse lathered with foam, dashed through the opening, cheering crowd, and, alighting, mounted the hustings of the little borough, where Lawson was, at that moment, manœuvring, with great

eloquence and exquisite tact, to allow of time for his return with the necessary instructions from Mrs. Grimshaw.

"Gentlemen," continued the speaker, after a very brief conversation with the new comer, "I will now inform you why you have heard me, for the last half hour, using, quite contrary to my general habit, a great many words to convey very little meaning—I have been waiting for the arrival of my friend, Frankum, here, with a message, which I expected, from Ackworth Hall. He is come, at last; and I will, therefore, give you, in a postscript, as it were, the real point of my long and rambling speech. It is this, brother electors:—you have heard me detail to you the miserable trick of our opponents—I have read to you the satisfactory and generous exculpation of the Major, by his friend, Mr. De Lisle; and I have now merely to add that, as some compensation for the injury which his enemies have tried to

inflict on him, I have Major Grimshaw's authority to announce to you, that the candidate who was proposed here, yesterday, shall be withdrawn from the approaching contest, aud that, yielding to the persuasions of myself and some of his other supporters, he is willing to offer himself, instead, to your independent choice. I have, then, the pleasure of proposing to you Major Grimshaw. Will you accept him? (Immense cheering.) He is not, I admit, a great orator, and I do not think that he has either the ambition or the presumption to talk to you of giving a new constitution to the country; but I am sure that, if you elect him, he will prove a pains-taking, consistent, and honest member." (Loud applause).

Frankum next rose, to second the nomination; and, having denounced Sir Stephen Brydges, in the strongest terms, and inquired, loudly and repeatedly, what had become of Stinger and his myrmidons—all of which the

crowd, again and again, vociferously cheered—the meeting separated. An active canvass was then begun, and continued up to the late hour of twelve o'clock at night, when the victory of the Major appeared so certain, that, on the following morning, Sir Stephen Bridges, without waiting to issue even a farewell address, or make a farewell speech from the window of his hotel, ordered a post-chaise and quitted the borough, amid the hisses and execrations of the mob. So ended the election, Major Grimshaw's return giving the greatest satisfaction, in the town, and throughout the neighbourhood.

The daily calls, congratulations, and feastings at Ackworth Hall, subsequent to this great and joyful event, would fill another volume, if we chose to relate all that occurred, but we shall act wisely, perhaps, in forbearing. We must, however, mention that, at the end of about a fortnight, Mrs. Grimshaw gave a

grand entertainment to her large circle of friends. There was a *déjeuner*, on the lawn, for the tenantry and peasants, together with a crowd of voters from ——; a dinner-party, in the evening, for guests of a higher class, and, afterwards, a ball. Altogether, what with the presence of Lady Lynden, and her nephew, Ernest, (who might, one day, become a marquis,) two Members of Parliament, the Major and his colleague in the representation, three or four knights, a retired post-captain or two, the colonel of the militia, and the most distinguished of the commanding officers of the yeomanry force of the district, it was by far the proudest day in the life of the delighted hostess. Nor, amid all these manifold splendours, did Mrs. Grimshaw forget those to whom she mainly owed her present intoxicating triumph; in proof of which, we may, in conclusion, add, that among the first whom she introduced to her friend, the countess, was Law-

son, handsomely acknowledging, as she did so, that to him her debt of obligation was, indeed, greater than she could ever adequately repay. Afterwards, she volunteered to dance Sir Roger de Coverley with Frankum; which fact, taken in connection with the warm expressions of regard and gratitude employed by the Major, just before, at the supper-table, in alluding to the indispensable exertions of the latter, during the course of the recent struggle, and to his previous intrepidity and skill, in rescuing his daughter, Julia, from the certain destruction which, otherwise, awaited her, on the occasion of the serious affair with the runaway ponies, in the Park, confirmed, beyond a doubt, the growing opinion of every one present, that Frankum would, ere long, be united, by the ties of matrimony, to the interests and future fortunes of this important family.

The stay of the Countess of Lynden at Ackworth Hall had now extended to a period

of close upon three months; but Ernest had, at last, thrown aside his crutch, and the third day from the above evening was, therefore, appointed for their return to London. Quickly the morning for their departure arrived; the Countess, having taken leave of her friends, stepped into the carriage; and as De Lisle prepared to follow her, he said, handing, as he spoke, his card to Frankum, who stood beside Julia Grimshaw, beneath the portico:—

"Remember, that whenever you come to Town, I shall expect to have the pleasure of seeing you, at my quiet abode."

The visit, thus proposed, was paid in due season; but, ere the advent of that time, the circumstances of the amiable giver of the invitation were materially changed: by the premature death of his giddy, spendthrift cousin, in a fit of delirium tremens—brought on by his continued excesses—Ernest was become fourth Marquis of Waltham, having

succeeded to an estate considerably laden with debts, and obtained, in marriage, the hand, which he had so long sought, of the Lady Eleanor De Lisle, sister to the deceased nobleman. As regards Lady Lynden, we need only say, that she remained, for many years subsequent to this desired union, one of the first leaders of the world of fashion, and generally spoke of the country squirearchy, when she had occasion to mention them, in terms a good deal mollified from the language she had formerly employed.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The stab," she cried, "was given in jealousy;
But never fled a purer spirit to heaven."

ROGERS' *Italy.*

READER, our tale draws rapidly to its close; yet we must ask you to accompany us, once more, and for the last time, back to Paris.

Aurélie and Louise were sitting alone, at fancy work, in the charming and elegant *salon*

of their uncle. The house was peculiarly still and silent; in the distance was faintly audible the confused, sea-like murmur of the gay capital; but, in the apartment itself, were only to be heard, at intervals, in quiet conversation, the soft and gentle voices of its two occupants, and, now and then, the unobserved sounds produced by a favorite canary-bird, as it sportively hopped from perch to perch, or rubbed its hard beak against the shining bars of its gilded prison-house. The bright, afternoon sun was pouring its rich, flooding light into the room, through the long windows—its beams radiating from mirror to mirror, and causing many of the last and fairest flowers of the parting year, as they stood in vases, on cabinet and table, to exhale their sweetest odours.

"Louise, you are not attending to me," said Aurélie, raising her head, and removing her tired fingers from her own unfinished work;

"when will you have done counting those odious rows?"

"*Mais, oui, ma sœur*—I am listening, I assure you—One, two, three—Oh, dear! oh, dear! how very tiresome of you, Aurélie, to have interrupted me, just then. Do, dearest, read over the directions, for me, once more—only this once, indeed. How many stitches ought there to be from the scarlet to the green?"

"That I will do, if you will, first, tell me what I was last saying to you."

"Why, wern't you asking me if I ever expected to see my little *capitaine* made a colonel?"

"No, *mechante*, I was inquiring nothing of the sort. Bah, a colonel, indeed! Do you think they will ever permit such a little, grey-moustached man to reach the grade of colonel?"

"*Mon Dieu!* sister—what do you mean? Grey!"

"Yes, grey, Louise, I tell you—grey as a badger, when the dye is off. But, no matter—I was asking you how, if this strange news about our uncle's being an Englishman, and no relation of ours, should, unhappily, prove true, and if he should wish to go and reside in England, and Arthur should take me there, too, how you would feel, at remaining behind us, with your *petit capitaine?*"

"Do not ask me the question, Aurélie; I should grieve, most deeply, to lose our dear, kind uncle; but to be separated from you, also, would render me the most wretched being alive. Oh! I wish you had never seen an Englishman; I wish there was no such country as England! Is it not enough that, in war, she has robbed our brave armies of much of their glory, without stealing away our uncles and sisters, too!"

"*Ma foi*, I believe you are right, Louise. What do you say to my giving up Arthur—(he has not written to me, by the bye, ever since he quitted us, *le perfide)* and to my marrying poor Morosini, after all, on condition that he shall not carry me to the other side of the Alps!"

"No, dear Aurélie, no; you must not do that, either, now—better wed even an Englishman than a man who is, or will certainly become, insane."

"Alas! the more reason for my marrying him, Louise, since, I really fear, his unfortunate passion for me has helped very much to make him so. Poor fellow! it is so difficult for me to know how to treat him. I cannot find the heart to refuse seeing him; and yet the slightest kindness which I show him again renews his old hopes, and must, by the bye, drive the arrow of despair deeper into his soul. Come, Louise, cease that abominable counting

of detestable stitches, and counsel me how to act."

"Well, my advice to you is, to take an early opportunity—to-day, if he come—of again telling him that he must not think of you any more. Ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen!"

"Oh, Louise, you are more heartless by far than I am, in spite of my seeming manner and that careless cruelty, towards him, of which you once were so fond of accusing me. You cannot even guess the extent of his mad, unhappy love for me—the depth of his jealousy of Arthur. Plead for him, dear Louise! Do but plead for him, again; convince me that it would be honourable, that it would be just in me, to save him by the sacrifice of my ownself, and I may yet listen to you! You do not know how miserable he has made me. It was but the other morning, while we were all standing on the top of the old tower of the church of Notre Dame, of which you will recollect, per-

haps, I once spoke so jestingly, in relation to Morosini, that he came to my side and whispered in my ear, how happily he could then die if I would only spring from that giddy height with him. Never shall I forget the mixture of horror, alarm and pity with which I shrank back from the low parapet, and hastened to descend the worn and narrow steps!"

Louise half uttered a shriek of involuntary terror at the mere thought, and, looking up in her sister's face, perceived that she was deadly pale, and trembling with strong emotion. At that instant, the door opened and the Italian walked into the room. He looked ill and emaciated. His long over coat was buttoned up close to the throat; but a watchful observer, being forewarned of hidden danger, might possibly have caught a momentary glimpse of the dark handle of a concealed weapon, very much resembling a dagger. There was cer-

tainly, however, no suspicion of anything of the kind aroused in the minds of either Louise or Aurélie. As Morosini remarked the air of agitation and alarm in which he had surprised the two girls, his own manner underwent a change from dejected composure into one of evident excitement, and his hand suddenly clutched at something at his breast. Then he arrested, as quickly, his intention, whatever it may have been, and so stood, for a second or two, glaring upon the weak occupants of the apartment with swelling chest and dilated nostrils.

"Signor Morosini, what ails you; what has happened, that you look at us with such a wild and terrified expression?" exclaimed Louise, starting from her seat and throwing herself with an instinctive but not very clearly defined feeling of dread before her sister.

But Aurélie moved her on one side, and

advancing, with perfect coolness, towards their unexpected visitor, held out her hand, saying:

"Be not alarmed, *mon ami*; our looks have surprised you, I see; but it is nothing at all—I was merely trying the strength of Louise's nerves a little, to see if she is fit to be the wife of one of the most redoubted soldiers in France; and I find that she really is not. Come in, and we will presently resume our needles under your gracious protection. Why, Louise, for shame on you; I must marry the little *capitaine*, and go to the wars with him, myself."

The Italian at once recovered himself, obeyed the invitation, and they all three seated themselves.

"When will M. de Malleville return?"

"We are daily expecting a letter from him to tell us," replied Aurélie.

Morosini got up and going to the piano, began to play, with no unskilful hand and with exquisite taste and feeling, a medley of snatches

from the airs and overtures of many of the popular operas of the day.

"The fit is again over," whispered Aurélie to Louise. "Poor Morosini! and I, alas, have helped to bring him to this state!"

As she spoke, the bright, womanly, pitying tears filled her large and lustrous eyes.

The player caught the sound, but not intelligibly, of the whispered words, and turning round beheld Aurélie weeping.

"Play on, dear Morosini; my tears are the best compliments that I can pay to your exquisite skill."

The wild and delighted gaze of the poor musician rested, for awhile, with rapturous and burning intensity upon the beautiful face of the speaker, and then, coming forward, he seized her hand passionately as he exclaimed:—

"Aurélie, dear, fondly, ever beloved Aurélie, why are you now in tears? Are they—no they cannot, may not be for me! And yet I

will believe so, 'though the belief, falsely held, should kill me in the moment that it ends—as end, I know, it soon must. Which, tell me which were the notes that moved you, that I may learn their secret meaning and go on eternally repeating them, until death terminate my late born, short lived happiness. You called me, too, dear Morosini! Oh, such kind words, Aurélie, spoken without those kind words, meaning—"

"They have a meaning Morosini, indeed, a deep and earnest meaning."

"But is it one of love?"

The speaker waited for an answer. Aurèlie looked towards her sister, who had sat trembling during this brief scene, and Louise, not correctly comprehending her meaning but acting on the impulse of her own alarm, rose to quit the room and seek the assistance of old Godefroi.

"Stay Louise!" exclaimed Aurélie, who

dreaded to be left alone with her impassioned lover; "do not quit the room." Then turning again to the Italian, she added:—"Morosini, wait but till to-morrow, and I will then give you my final answer to your question."

The unhappy artist dropped the hand which he had firmly held as he replied:

"I will do so; but I know already what that answer will be. You do not—you cannot love me, then! It is but pity that you feel for me!"

They were here interrupted, very fortunately, by the unlooked for entrance of Louise's capitaine. He came in with his face radiant with austere, military smiles, and his moustaches most undeniably black and extraordinarily well turned. He had an open letter in his hand—Having performed a very professionally dignified salute to the assembled party he advanced to Louise, and said:

"There, read that letter, Louise, with

which I have, this morning, been honoured by your excellent uncle. What a misfortune that he should persist in supposing himself to be an Englishman!"

In this communication, which we need not give at length, the writer, after again entering into some details respecting the discovery which he had made as to himself during his stay in England, spoke as follows:

"And now, my dear friend, as, in consequence of these events, I may think it fit to pass many of my remaining days in this country, I am most anxious to see both my dear nieces comfortably settled in life as soon as possible. I have ample means of bestowing on each of them a handsome fortune; and if you will, therefore, so arrange your affairs, that, on my return, you may be able to name an early day for your marriage with Louise, you will confer on me another of those favours

which have already so greatly endeared you to my heart. I shall allow you to be the bearer of this happy news to your future wife; and may God grant that my dear Aurélie may, ere long, be as secure of all earthly blessings, in the society of an honourable and affectionate husband as I feel firmly convinced dear Louise will be under your ever watchful and tender protection.

"Ever affectionately your's

"FRANÇOIS DE MALLEVILLE.

"Or, as I must sign myself in future,

"PHILIP WILDMAN.

"P.S.—M. Maitland and I leave here tomorrow, and hope to reach Paris on the morning after you will have received this letter."

It may be imagined the pleasure with which

Louise perused this announcement; indeed, it at once put to flight from her mind nearly all remembrance of the painful impressions which the recent conduct of poor Morosini had left there. She had, however, too much prudence, and feeling consideration for the young artist's distress, to say anything on the delightful subject in his presence; and, therefore, having exchanged a meaning glance with the adoring soldier, she at once passed the letter, without making any explanatory comments thereon, to her sister. As she read the latter portion of the contents, Aurélie's colour rose and then died away again, in rapid succession, upon her cheeks, while her heart, burthened with an undefined anxiety, produced by her uncle's few expressions regarding herself, throbbed fast and audibly. There appeared to her some deeper meaning in the forcible solicitude of the words employed than altogether met the ear. What might be their real and full significance?

Had Arthur betrayed her, by again uniting the temporarily dissolved bonds of his old and boyish attachment in England, with the former existence of which he had imperfectly made her acquainted? That was scarcely probable, either, or he would not now be returning to Paris in company with M. De Malleville. What then could be the meaning of the passage referred to? Time would explain it; but, in the meanwhile, Aurélie yielded, with almost a superstitious weakness, to her secret, heart-sickening forebodings of some approaching evil.

And Morosini, seated quietly by, apparently solely occupied in making a hasty drawing on a half sheet of paper, that he had accidentally found lying on the table before him, was, in reality, much more intently observing the signs of agitation, but too clearly visible on her changing countenance. Instinctively, too, he seemed to guess everything that was passing

through her mind; and as her brow, every instant, grew more and more sad and anxious, the light of a new hope again faintly dawned within his wreck-strewn, passion-torn bosom. Let us not talk of the disinterestedness of love, since its strongest and most essential principle is nothing but the most intense and desperate selfishness! Show me the lover who is quite ready to lay down his life for the woman he loves, and I will still refute the doctrine of disinterestedness, by asking him to accept that woman's word, and unrepiningly relinquish his title to her hand, on the simple ground that she really loves another better than she does him. It is a theory fit only to be built up in the minds of school girls, and be registered by them on the margin of the wildest romance that was ever penned for their amusement.

As Louise was about to leave the room to enjoy in secret, with *capitaine*, the happiness which his communication had caused her, she

caught sight of what the Italian was engaged upon.

"Ah, Signior," she said, "what, another likeness of her? And I vow, too, that it is the best you have ever taken. Look there, Aurélie, has he not admirably seized your difficult expression?"

And the speaker passed on.

Aurélie started from her painful reverie at the remark, and, approaching, took the paper in one hand, while she rested the other upon the table before her.

"You will complete this little sketch of me, Morosini, will you not?" she asked. "I will return to claim it, presently."

The poor artist made no reply, but bent down and kissed the fair, white hand that was close beside him. Aurélie gently withdrew it, and quitted the apartment. In her momentary confusion and anxiety to escape, she forgot, however, to take away with her De Malleville's

letter, which, therefore, remained behind, half-open, on the table; and as Morosini involuntarily glanced towards it, his eye read a few disconnected words, They were but a few, indeed, but they appeared to sting him, once more, to the very quick, and he was on the point of rushing from the scene in despair, when Godefroi entered.

The old servant, who had, at all times, as much curiosity in his disposition as any woman, had observed, from the manner of the little *capitaine*, and the subsequent conduct of Louise, that his absent master's letter must evidently have contained news far more important than the mere announcement of his daily expected return home, and he had, in consequence, shown great impatience, to be informed of what was about to take place. In this desire he had not yet been gratified, Louise having cut short his interrogations by telling him that he would know all about it in good time. The next

person whom he met was Aurélie, as she retired from the *salon* towards the *boudoir;* but neither from her could he obtain any satisfactory reply. The fact was, that Aurélie dreaded the old man's loquacity, lest, if she told him any thing, he should go, at once, and regale every one in the house—perhaps the Italian among the rest—with some largely extended report of the real truth, and thus commit the very mischief which was sought to be, for the present, avoided. But Godefroi had an imagination capable of taking full revenge for this seeming insult to the confidence properly duè to his long servitude in the family. At once, therefore, calling to mind certain passages which he had heard read to him from M. De Malleville's previous letters from England, he made up his mind boldly to give it out, that both his young mistresses were positively going to be married as soon as ever their uncle should return.

"If it is not true," he muttered to himself, "they must soon deny it—that's all."

And, in this frame of mind, he found an excuse for entering the *salon*, thinking to extract something more on the subject from Morosini. But, besides, if he did not succeed in that purpose, he knew that he should, at least, have the satisfaction of re-awakening the Italian's jealousy, by the fabricated tale he was prepared to tell him. He disliked *le perfide artiste*, as he often called him, and took the greatest pleasure in teasing him, respecting his hopeless love for Aurélie.

"*Pardon, monsieur,*" said he, entering the room; "I thought I saw you go out, just now."

"No, Godefroi, no, but I am going immediately."

"Fine news this, monsieur, is it not?"

"What news do you mean, Godefroi?"

The old man stopped, placed his hands on

his hips, and put on a pretendedly reproachful expression of countenance, as he replied:

"What! so you, too, monsieur, would try to prevent my learning all the particulars, would you? *Allez-donc*—I am not *si bête* as you think me. But no matter; they have told me quite enough for my purpose, at present."

He turned round as if to leave the room, which, however, he by no means thought really of doing.

"Speak out, at once," said the Italian, with great excitement of manner; "tell me, plainly, what it is that you have heard, or I will——" and his hand again clutched at the concealed weapon in his bosom.

"Why, is it possible that they have not really informed you, monsieur?" replied Godefroi, preserving his coolness.

"No, not a word of anything!"

"Then, perhaps, I ought not to do so, either. Yet stay—you will not, for all the world, say I

told you, eh? *Ecoutez-donc*, but let it be quite *entre nous*—Louise is going to be married to the capitaine directly monsieur returns. And so is Aurélie, also, to *son Anglais*. *Mon Dieu!*—What a handsome pair they will make, Monsieur Morosini, *n'est-ce-pas!*"

"*Misérable!*" exclaimed the artist, seizing the old man by the collar of his waistcoat, and flinging him aside with such force that he reached the floor, "lie there, and curses on you for my thanks!"

And ere the astonished tale-bearer had time to raise himself to his legs, his infuriated assailant had left the house.

"*Diable!*" muttered Godefroi, getting up in some alarm, "I must say nothing of all this to Aurélie, or she will never forgive me. *Ce malheureux jeune homme*—I didn't think he would have taken the news so deeply to heart, either. Poor fellow! I wish before informing him of my suspicions—for, after all, I don't

know that it is true—that I had told him of my own little affair with *Sophié*. It might have enabled him to bear his disappointment at losing her better than he does at present. *Mais enfin c'est egal!* we shan't be troubled any more with him, here, I expect."

* * * *

It was the day following the scenes we have here described. It being the hour of dinner, the students had all left the Atélier, and Morosini remained, alone, beside his beautiful statue, now wanting but a few finishing touches to render it complete. His arms were thrown around the exquisite marble, and his head rested upon the bosom of the fair figure. It was a strange and pitiable sight thus to witness the throbbing, convulsed form of the poor, invalided, frenzied, dying artist, hanging crushed and bleeding, as

it were, upon the inanimate neck of that adored idol, the work of his own hands, and created by him imperfectly to embody his passionate conception of the divine loveliness of that other, living, breathing, brilliant form, which all his toil and love and adoration had failed to win.

Presently he started back, a few paces, and stood gazing, long and wistfully, upon the motionless figure.

"Yes, I will destroy both the poor copy and the bright original—I cannot bear, any longer, to look upon the sweetness that is to feast a rival's eye!"

He took up a large, heavy hammer, and half raised it, as if to strike, then adding:

"Oh, if at one blow I could dash to pieces not only the brittle marble but the cherished image that is engraven on my memory, all might soon, again, be well; but, alas! how can I forget what I have so long and fondly worshipped?

And, yet, she has never loved me; why, then, should I hesitate?"

Again he poised the instrument of destruction, but, a second time, he refrained from striking.

"Dear, dear Aurélie! if I still lack the courage to deface thy beauty even here, in this dull form, how shall I wreak my despair against thy real self? How could I harm thee?"

He bent forward and wildly kissed the cold lips of the statue, and then again recoiling, he exclaimed, fiercely:

"Ah, that has given me new power! Yes, you look kindly—divinely—but you have a heart as utterly cold, in regard to me, as are those stony lips themselves. Away, then, with thy sweet image! It shall not, longer, perpetuate my misery. There!"

And, the next moment, the inimitable result of months and years of his devoted labour lay shivered into fragments on the ground before him.

While this scene was passing in the Atélier, another, less fantastically painful, was preparing in the house of M. De Malleville. The uncle, with the reluctant consent of Arthur, had explained to Aurélie the distressing dilemma in which the young man stood, at the time, between herself and his real niece, Mary Wildman.

"I think, however, after long consideration of the matter, Aurélie," added De Malleville, "that he is wise for all your sakes, and chiefly, perhaps, for his own future happiness, to hold fast by his determination of fulfilling the engagement he has contracted with you; and that he is one, above all men living, to whose honourable devotion and faithfulness you may safely confide your lot I am most firmly convinced. Be, then, guided by my counsel, and do not, in consequence of what has occurred in England, withdraw from him your hand."

"No, dear uncle, it may not be so—I am

bound—I am compelled, for the first time, I believe, in my life, to disobey your wishes, and reject your advice. I will trust, in this instance, to the unaided strength of my own heart; and never will I consent to rob another of her prior right to happiness, to gratify my selfishness. I know the greatness of the sacrifice, but I am prepared to make it!"

"My noble, generous girl! I will not question the rectitude of your admirable motives, nor further seek to draw you away from pursuing your high and holy course; but yet, my poor Aurélie, give yourself time for longer consideration—weigh well your feelings."

"Uncle," returned the girl, "I have learnt from your teaching and example, never to parley with temptation. The honest mind should protect the first right thought of the heart, or it may never produce a second."

Later in the afternoon of that disastrous

day, Aurélie and Arthur Maitland were walking together in the garden, at the rear of the house. The hour was a sad one for both of them, and although each had the same subject at heart, violently struggling for expression, they proceeded some distance without the utterance of a syllable, on the part of either. At length, Aurélie found strength to begin:—

"Arthur," said she, "it must not—it cannot be as you desire; it would be the greatest meanness in me—nay, the grossest injustice towards you, Miss Wildman, and myself, were I to exact from you the fulfilment of vows, made under the influence of the false impressions, by which you were unhappily beset, at the time I received them."

"It matters not how or when they were made, dearest Aurélie," replied her companion, "my only remaining chance of happiness now rests on the strict and unhesitating promise I have given."

"That is because your generosity and honour prompt you to think more of my sacrifice, in losing you, than of what your own would be, were I to become your wife, in place of her who has a higher title to your love than I can ever have. No, no, *mon ami*, out of pure selfishness, I tell you that it cannot be. I understand your nature too well: the man who refuses to break a promise, let it cost him what it may, is not a person who can easily transfer his affections from one object to another."

At this point of their conversation, Aurélie's eye unexpectedly caught sight of the figure of Morosini at the other end of the garden, but as her companion did not observe him, and he hastily retreated behind a row of tall orange trees, as if to re-enter the house, she took no further notice of the circumstance.

"But," continued Arthur, "granting for a moment, the truth of much that you have said,

do you not think, that, even were I to consent to wed another, the remembrance of your fate, of your self-sacrifice, for my sake, would poison the peace and contentment of my whole life? By all the love, then, which you have hitherto borne to me, reflect only upon that, and doom not, I beseech you, my days to an unceasing and perpetual agony of remorse. Oh! dear, generous, noble Aurélie, do not again persuade me to yield to you; nothing shall now separate us! I swear to you, that it would be against all my wishes, all my happiness, and I will not, therefore, attempt to loosen the strengthening bonds that at present unite us!"

"Then I must adopt a different tone, and with my own hands sever them," replied the girl, firmly, as a flush of excited pride mounted to her beautiful brow. "Do you suppose that I, who have loved you with such fond devotion and tenderness, will consent to be the holder

of a divided heart, feeling myself, moreover, indebted, for even that poor share, to an act little better than that of the meanest robbery?"

"Aurélie, you do me wrong—it shall be entirely yours, as I once gave it you! Already, your words have recalled to yourself, every thought, every feeling of my being. Oh, do not, after all, reject me; do not——"

"Hush, hush!" said Aurélie, interrupting him, "go not a step further; at present, I admire, I adore you, but a continuance of this foreswearing weakness may make me despise and hate you!"

She laid her hand quietly upon his arm and pressed closer to his side. The shadow of the slim Italian, as he crossed stealthily from an opposite path, and concealed himself behind a small summer-house, fell, for an instant, at the very feet of the speakers, but neither of them remarked it.

"And now listen to me," continued Aurélie looking up into the face of her companion; "there is some compensation for every suffering in the world, and I have one in store for myself. It is, dear Arthur, to know and love the woman who is destined to become your wife. Louise is soon to marry her little *capitaine;* my uncle then talks of going to reside in England, and as I could not bear to be separated from one whom I have always loved as a father, I will obtain his permission to accompany him. In my cousin, Mary Wildman, (for so I shall call her) I hope to discover one who will supply the place of my own lost sister, and in viewing her and your happiness I shall regain mine."

"Can you, really, believe in the possibility of such a thing, dearest Aurélie?" inquired Arthur.

"I see the certainty of it," answered the generous girl, and already I—"

A rapid footstep grated upon the gravel pathway behind them; Aurélie turned quickly at the sound, and a sharp gleaming dagger, aimed with all the force of the maniac hand of Morosini, was buried, to the hilt, in her exposed bosom.

The wild cry of despair and agony which broke from the lips of Arthur, at the savage deed, brought De Malleville and old Godefroi in terror to the spot. Aurélie was in the arms of her lover, her drooping face ghastly pale, and her hands, spotted with her heart's blood, pressed tightly upon her bosom as if vainly trying to stay the rapid ebb of life. The Italian stood near with folded arms, the features of his haggard countenance writhing and distorted by horrible emotion.

"Ay," he exclaimed, "take her, she is yours now—her beauty all belongs to you; but, after what I have done, it will melt away, within your embrace, like wax before the de-

vouring flame. Monsieur de Malleville, look here—see! Did I not tell you, she should never be his? (pointing to his rival.) Observe, watch how fast she fades into decay! Go, go on, dear Aurélie; never stay to say adieu—I will soon follow thee to the distant land whither thou art travelling!"

And the poor maniac attempted to fling himself at the feet of his victim, as he concluded speaking. De Malleville held him back, however; and additional assistance arriving at the moment, he was safely lodged in the hands of the police, after the dying girl had been conveyed into the house.

Aurélie never spoke again; but as Arthur Maitland knelt and wept beside the couch on which she lay, she frequently looked fondly at him, and kissed the hand which held her own. The best surgeons in Paris hastened to attend on her, but their aid was useless, and within the short space of half-an-hour from the time

when the fatal wound was inflicted, her brave and gentle spirit took its flight from the stricken and suffering, but still lovely body which had contained it for so short a period of life's usual length. Morosini, ere the day for her funeral arrived, had become the wretched inmate of a private mad-house, in the vicinity of the capital.

And now why should we linger, in description, over the sad and joyless course of the many, gloomy months which followed this last catastrophe of our tale? Let us merely add, that they were passed, both by De Malleville and Arthur, sometimes alone, but generally in company, in the daily performance of a religiously regular pilgrimage of love to the little white marble tomb of poor Aurélie. At length, De Malleville thought it was time that these sad visits should be interrupted.

"Arthur," said he, one day, "perhaps, in forgetfulness of the living, we have already

wept too long over the dead. Let us now think a little of others; this grief has almost broken down the former health and spirits of my niece Louise, and I am therefore anxious that, for the sake of accelerating her recovery, she should, for a time, leave Paris. I shall, in consequence, this evening, propose to her the immediate celebration of her long delayed marriage. It will be a painful ceremony, but it must, and ought to take place at once, and I intend that it shall do so. When that is over, you and I will travel to Italy, or proceed directly to England, whichever journey you may then prefer."

Accordingly, a fortnight afterwards, Louise was really married to her little *capitaine*, who took her, for a complete change, away with him to pass the "honeymoon" among the mountains of Switzerland. Not long, subsequently, old Godefroi was handsomely pensioned off, for his long and faithful services, and

so allowed to retire into the country, and end his days within sight of the cottage of his beloved *Sophie*. The whole of the handsome establishment in Paris was broken up, and the furniture sold, with the exception of such portions of it as were removed into the smaller, but not less elegant, home of Louise and her gallant husband. And these arrangements being all completed, M. De Malleville and Arthur Maitland set out, in company, for—no, not for Italy, but for England.

CHAPTER IX.

"Though mountains meet not, lovers may."

Percy's Reliques

WE conclude our story, after an interval of about another year. How stood most of our remaining characters at that time? Arthur and Mary, as the reader will naturally suppose, were married, and the former having, on the death of his father (which event

occurred soon after his return to England) inherited a small property of his own, in addition to the fortune his wife had brought him, the further study of painting became the pleasant pastime of his leisure hours. The farm at Knowle-water was given up, and Mrs. Wildman, whose failing health and spirits were a good deal revived by the return of prosperity and comfort, went to spend her remaining years beneath the roof of her daughter. As to De Malleville, or Philip Wildman, which ever the reader may now wish to have him called, the first thing to which he devoted a portion of the earliest proceeds arising from the recovered UNCLE'S LEGACY, before fulfilling his promise of making it all over to his niece, Mary, as her fortune, was to raise a costly and beautiful monument, in the little parish church, to mark out to future generations of the family the spot where the remains of his hapless brother, "Alick," had been

decently intered, some time previously. Afterwards, he settled himself as quietly in this, his native country, as a man bred a foreigner could well be expected to do. He often, however, made journeys to France, for the purpose of visiting Louise, and of, again and again, looking upon the quiet grave of his far more dearly loved Aurélie.

And what had become of Frankum? Why, in reward for his long and unwearied exertions to have the distinguished honour conferred upon him of being allowed to assist (no longer as an *amateur* but officially) in the public administration of justice, according to his own sense of the high and responsible duties of a magistrate, he was, at last, raised to a seat upon the bench of county Solons, from which, in consequence, the Rev. Mr. Fallow soon retired in indignation and profound disgust, with the full conviction upon his mind, that from that day the high tide of England's prosperity

and pride would rapidly ebb below even the low water mark at which it stood prior to the period when his mind had, fortunately, been called upon to give new strength and meaning to the imperfect laws and constitution of the realm.

And now followed the crowning triumph of the newly made magistrate; for, in less than a month after his proud elevation to the dignified office of a "Justice of the Peace," the following paragraph appeared in all the provincial journals:

"On Tuesday morning last that esteemed and honoured ornament of this division of the County of Devon, Robert Frankum Esq., led to the hymeneal altar Julia, the elegant and accomplished eldest daughter of the veteran M.P. for the borough of ———, Major Henry Hercules Grimshaw, of the —— regiment of Dragoons. Immediately after the brilliant

ceremony (the full particulars of which were also eloquently described) the happy pair left Ackworth Hall to pay a long promised visit, as we are confidently informed, to their noble and distingushed friends, the Marquis and Marchioness of Waltham, at —— Castle."

Of Major Grimshaw, himself, we are in duty bound further to relate, that he continued to hold his seat in "the great council of the nation", notwithstanding the occurrence of two more general elections, until increasing age, at last, incapacitated him for the longer performance of his labourious duties; and during the whole course of his parliamentary career, he found in his active and energetic wife an adviser to whose ability and skill the electors eventually did ample justice, by accepting, at her sole nomination, the next member whom they honoured with their suffrages. The old couple still live comfortably at the Hall with

their remaining daughter, Isabel, who is, probably, fated to die a spinster.

Lawson, too, blessed with a sufficient fortune, is yet living in the full enjoyment of the peace of a jovial, grey-headed bachelor.

We have only one other person to mention, and that one is Dick Morrison. His recovery from the injuries, which he received at the hands of Barrow, was slow and tedious; but his former health and vigour were restored to him, at last. As early as possible, after his own marriage, Arthur Maitland remembered his debt of gratitude to the preserver of his life; and immediately he purchased a pretty little schooner, just then ready for launching, at one of the neighbouring sea-ports, and presented her to Dick. She was christened after the poor "Petrel" whose fate we have already chronicled in these volumes; but the new vessel was destined to bring both credit and profit to her owner in a quieter, more honest, and less

hazardous trade than that in which her predecessor had been formerly engaged. The kind-hearted sailor, we may remark, failed not to make early inquiries in order to find out his once reputed father, the maligned and deeply injured Mr. Manby; but ere that time arrived he had been long since dead.

At this day, Dick Morrison has quite a little fleet of his own, whose white sails frequently give life and beauty to the blue waters of the Bristol Channel. As so considerable a ship-owner, he has been enabled to retire from the fatigues of the sea, and he, now, lives happily on shore, having, for some time, taken to himself a "mate" to be the light and ornament of his cheerful home.

THE END.

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